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SAPPHO OF LESBOS

HER LIFE AND TIMES

By ARTHUR WEIGALL

Late Inspector-General of Antiquities,
Egyptian Government

WITH THIRTEEN REPRODUCTIONS FROM SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

"Some say that there are nine muses; but they are careless, for look!—there is Sappho of Lesbos, who is a tenth."

—PLATO

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PREFACE

Every known fragment of Sappho's poetry is quoted in full in this book, these quotations being scattered throughout the text, but printed so as to be easily distinguishable. In my translations I have used the Greek text as edited by J. M. Edmonds in his *Lyra Græca* (revised edition), a work which is indispensable to all students of Greek lyric poetry.

I have kept to the Greek spelling of proper names except in cases in which the Latin, or the modern form based upon the Latin, is so well known that it would be confusing not to use it. For example, Corinth is here used and not the Greek Korinthos, Ephesus and not Ephesos, Caria and not Karia.

The illustrations are reproductions of my own sketches, some original and some based on photographs and prints.

It may perhaps seem that I have from time to time wandered too far from my main subject in order to give some account of Sappho's contemporaries and of the Greek world of her period. I must remind the reader, therefore, that the age in which the poetess lived has been much neglected by historians, and that, so far as I know, mine is the first attempt to bring it into focus, so to speak, in its relation to Lesbos. Moreover, Sappho's biography has not before been written in any detail; and in piecing together the fragmentary story of her life I have continuously felt the need of providing a firm setting for my patchwork by describing the people, places, and events of her time.

I shall be criticized also, I dare say, for having introduced a considerable amount of matter relating to what may be

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called the sex-life of that age; and for this some apology must be made. In fairness to Sappho it is necessary to understand the attitude of her contemporaries towards those emotions and passions which in one form or another, openly or in secret, play so lively a part in the tragedy and comedy of human existence. I must explain, however, that I have endeavoured to handle the subject with a light touch, and have tried to avoid the anachronism of viewing the easy morals of the sixth century B. C. from the standpoint of the sterner moralists of the twentieth century A. D.

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SAPPHO OF LESBOS

Ah, the singing, ah, the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them
While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah, the tenth, the Lesbian! The nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping.

—*Swinburne*

SAPPHO OF LESBOS

Chapter One

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF SAPPHO AT ERESOS

THE beginning of the story of the life of Sappho, the incomparable Lesbian poetess, takes us back into the last quarter of the seventh century B. C.—a century of outstanding importance in ancient history, when old civilizations were falling and new powers were rising, when the white nations of the eastern Occident were preparing to measure their strength with the darker-skinned races of the western Orient, and when the center of mankind's cultural activities was shifting westwards to Greece and her colonies in the Ægean. The youthful spirit of Greek thought and achievement had gone out into the world, and the prodigious birth of a new age was imminent in the shadowed and whispering house of time.

The extreme delicacy of Sappho's poetry, and the refinement, the sophistication, of her life, bring her so close to us that it is not easy to think of her as having lived in the archaic period of Greek history, long before the age of the great and famous sculptors whose work set a standard of perfection already venerable in ancient Rome, or of the celebrated philosophers and dramatists whose labors laid the foundations upon which classical antiquity built; and yet a glance at the mere names of her contemporaries re-

veals at once the vast distance of her epoch from our own.

Some part of her life, for example, synchronized with the life of Buddha in far-off India. In Babylon, the great Nebuchadnezzar was her contemporary; and in Israel the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were issuing their thunders in the days when she, in the isle of Lesbos, was writing her love-poems. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, rose into power at the close of her life; and at its beginning Psammetichos, Pharaoh of Egypt, was at death grips with Assyria. Rome was then but an unimportant little city-state ruled by its primitive kings; and in the Greek world the Seven Wise Men of ancient tradition were uttering their almost forgotten wisdom while she was singing her immortal songs.

With some degree of certainty, I think, if not wholly without the possibility of error, we may assign her birth to the year 612 B. C.; and for the benefit of those to whom she is but a name it may be said at once that in her was born the greatest lyric poetess of all time, whom the ancient world regarded as more than human, whom Plato considered to be no less than a tenth Muse,[1] whom Socrates "rejoiced to call The Beautiful," [2] whom Strabo termed "a miracle," [3] and whose works were burnt by the early Church as a menace to public morals, leaving to the scholars of our own epoch the task of rediscovering the scattered fragments of her verses which had survived in quotations by other ancient writers, or had been preserved by the tender earth amidst the ruins of long-forgotten cities.

A somewhat technical discussion as to how I arrive at that date will perhaps not be out of place here at the outset. Strabo, the old Greek geographer, who was writing in

[1] *Palatine Anthology*, ix, 506.
[2] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv, 7.
[3] Strabo, xiii, 617.

the reign of the Emperor Augustus, rather over nineteen hundred years ago, tells us [4] that Sappho lived in the time of Pittakos, the famous Tyrant of Lesbos; and we know from another source [5] that Pittakos died, at the age of "over seventy," in the third year of the 52nd Olympiad,[6] that is to say in 570 B. C. Athenæus, that prolific collector of half-forgotten facts, who filled his note-books with all the old stray bits of literary information that the third century A. D., wherein he lived, could still give him, says that she was the contemporary of King Alyattes of Lydia, who reigned from about 617 to 560 B. C., and who was the father of the celebrated Crœsus. Suidas,[7] the Greek lexicographer, who lived in the tenth century A. D. but obtained his material from earlier authorities, makes her also the contemporary of the poet Stesichoros, who is stated by Cicero [8] to have died during the 56th Olympiad, that is to say in the period covering the years 556 to 553 B. C.

She is known, moreover, from two or three sources, including her own poems, to have been the friend of the poet Alkaios, the political enemy of Pittakos; and her brother is stated by Herodotus,[9] the great historian of the fifth century B. C., to have been in Egypt during the reign of King Amasis, who ascended the Egyptian throne in 569 B. C.

Sappho's general period, thus, is not open to question; but we are entitled to be precise. I shall try to show in this book that the story of her suicide because of her love for a man much younger than herself is based on fact; but since it is unlikely that she would have found herself so over-

[4] Ibid.
[5] Diogenes Laertius, 77.
[6] An Olympiad was the period of four years from one celebration of the Olympic Games to the next.
[7] Suidas: *Lexicon.*
[8] Cicero: *Republic,* ii, 20; Suidas: *Lexicon.*
[9] Herodotus, ii, 134.

whelmed by romantic despair at an age later than the early fifties—woman's most tragic age, when beauty wanes but longing is not gone—one must suppose her, on physical and psychological grounds, to have been no older than that at the time of her death, and no younger, either, as is shown by her sad description of her increasing wrinkles, and her admission that she is beyond the age of childbearing.[10] She does not seem to have ended her days, however, before the year 558 B. C. which was the date of the death of her admirer, the famous Solon of Athens; for it is related by Ælian,[11] who lived in the third century A. D., that when Solon heard for the first time a certain apparently new poem of hers, he insisted that it should be taught to him at once, so that he might learn it before he died, the inference being that he was nearing his end and that Sappho was then still producing her passionate masterpieces.

Suidas says that she "flourished"—which may mean either that she was born or that she was at work—in the 42nd Olympiad, that is to say in 612 to 609 B. C.; Eusebius [12] states that she "flourished" in the second year of the 46th Olympiad, namely 595 B. C.; and the Parian Chronicle [13] states that her banishment from Lesbos, of which we shall read in due course, took place during the rule of the elder Kritias at Athens and the rule of the Gamori at Syracuse, which fixes that event within the limits of the period between 605 and 591 B. C.

But she would hardly have been banished, nor would that banishment have been considered an important event in her life, unless she had been fully grown and already a known personality at the time; and on the other hand, as has been

[10] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 10.
[11] Stobæus: *Florilegium,* xxix, 58.
[12] Eusebius: *Chronicon.*
[13] Parian Marble, 36.

said, she could not well have been more than middle-aged in 558 B. C. So, being thus tied down, we can best reconcile these dates by supposing that she was born—as may be inferred from Suidas—in 612 B. C.; that she began seriously to write at the age of seventeen in 595 B. C.—as Eusebius implies; that she was exiled when she was about twenty-one in 591 B. C., as the Parian Chronicle permits us to suppose; that she was fifty-four when Solon died in 558 B. C.; and that she killed herself when she was about fifty-five, in 557 B. C. In the course of this book it will be seen that these dates fit in remarkably well with known chronology and events.

The earliest reference we have in regard to the place of her birth is a quotation from Dioskorides, who lived in the middle of the third century B. C., three centuries after her death: he speaks of her as "the Muse of Æolian Eresos," [14] that being a city on the west coast of the island of Lesbos. But at about this same date the Bithynian historian Nymphis tells us that it was another Sappho who was born at Eresos, and that she was a famous courtesan; [15] and it would seem that Strabo accepted this distinction, for in writing of Eresos and the celebrated people born there he does not mention the poetess, but speaks of her elsewhere in connection with Mitylene,[16] where she certainly spent most of her life.

Suidas, however, in his Lexicon says that Sappho, the courtesan, was a lady of Mitylene, the chief city of Lesbos, on the east side of the island, and that Sappho, the poetess, was born at Eresos; and, indeed, coins have been found minted at Eresos, stamped with her head, these dating from Roman times, at which period she was evidently that city's pride. Ælian,[17] in speaking of the poetess, adds: "I understand that

[14] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 407.
[15] Athenæus, xiii, 70.
[16] Strabo, xii, 617, 618.
[17] Ælian: *Varia Historia,* xii, 19.

there was another Sappho in Lesbos, a courtesan, not a poetess"; and that there was confusion between the two is indicated by Suidas, who says: "Some authorities state that the other Sappho was also a lyric-poetess."

The truth of the matter will become clear to the reader in the following pages. Sappho's moral character came in for a certain amount of criticism a few generations after her death, and her suicide was regarded as so ignominious that those who were enraptured by the exquisite beauty of her poetry and who, like Plato, could find no adequate words to express their admiration for her work, were constrained to accept the explanation of some well-wisher, such as Nymphis, that it was another Sappho, not the poetess, who was the rather shocking heroine of these stories.

The separate existence of this other Sappho, in fact, as scholars now agree, was a well-meant invention; and in the first century B. C. the grammarian Didymus seems to have guessed as much, for he is said to have written a dissertation upon the question as to whether it was not indeed the poetess herself who was the lady of easy virtue.[18] A certain writer, too, of the second century A. D., whose name is lost, also faces the disconcerting truth, and in his brief account of the poetess, admits that she is accused, by some writers, of immoral living.[19]

It was at Eresos, then, in the year 612 B. C. that Sappho was born—the supreme mistress of song, "the *one,* of all the poets of all the literatures of the world, whose every word has a peculiar and unmistakable perfume, a seal of absolute perfection and inimitable grace," [20] and yet whose yearning search for the exquisite in physical companionship also, caused her memory in Christian times to be ranked amongst the in-

[18] Seneca: *Epistolæ,* 88.
[19] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, i, 1.
[20] J. Addington Symonds: *Studies of the Greek Poets.*

fluences subversive of good, and led her apologists to attach to another and imaginary Sappho of Eresos the record of frailty which with well-intentioned obtuseness they deemed incompatible with immortal genius.

Eresos [21] was one of those magic little Æolian cities of the Ægean which remained for a few far-off centuries like some formation of the clouds on the sea's horizon, and disappeared at length, hardly leaving a trace behind. It was a place at one time famous for its barley; and at harvest time the fields behind its white walls were like a sea of gold. There were no better crops to be found in the Islands or on the adjacent mainland of Asia Minor; and so skilled were the people of this eastern part of Lesbos in preparing the grain and in making bread that Eresos was well-known on this account long before it attained fame as the birthplace not only of Sappho but of Theophrastos and Phanias, the Peripatetic philosophers of two and a half centuries later. Archestratos, who, in the fourth century B. C., wrote a poetical work upon a subject which does indeed lend itself to passionate treatment—namely, the subject of cooking—said [22] that the barley bread they made was whiter than the driven snow, and he declared that if the gods ate barley bread they doubtless instructed their messenger Hermes, whom the Romans called Mercury, to buy it at those bakeries "on the sea-girt hill of famous Eresos" which were under his particular patronage.

This hill whereon the city was built was a romantic and rocky headland rising straight up from the waves of the Ægean; and the white houses, with their red roofs, were so closely clustered around the fortified acropolis upon its summit that from far out at sea the place was by day a landmark backed by the cloud-like mountains, and by night the lantern-lights in its small harbor and in its steeply ascend-

[21] Also written Eressos.
[22] Athenæus, iii, 77.

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ing streets and upon the walls of its high citadel grouped themselves into a beacon well-known to sailors. Ships which had crossed the hundred miles of open water between the shores of Greece and Lesbos often put in here on their way to Mitylene [23] or to the Troad and the Hellespont, sixty miles to the north; and one may suppose that the fame of the white bread was by this means spread.

There was a lofty mountain peak some six miles to the northeast of the city, up to which the good citizens climbed on the festivals of Cybele, the Mother goddess, who watched over the homes in the plain below from her shrine here amongst the eagles' nests; and at this altitude the eye could take in a panorama of almost unbelievable loveliness. To the south, forty miles away, there rose out of the sea the fertile hills of the isle of Chios, a little paradise of a place, where, though the women were as famous for their beauty as was their country for its wine, there had not been a case of adultery brought before the courts for many a year.[24]

To the southwest on a clear day, across the blue expanse of the Ægean, the dim mountains of Greece could be seen; and to the northwest those of the volcanic isle of Lemnos, the reputed home and workshop of Hephæstos, the Vulcan of the Romans, were clearly visible sixty miles away; while Mount Athos rising up on its harborless and dreaded peninsula, a hundred miles distant, could sometimes be discerned. To the northeast, fifty miles away, was Mount Ida, from the heights of which the gods were said to have watched the battles in the plain of Troy below; and eastwards there was the amazing view across Lesbos itself to the mainland of Asia Minor, where range behind range of mountains, delicately

[23] The name is also spelled Mytilene.

[24] Plutarch (*De Virtute Mulierum*) says that there had not been a case for seven hundred years before his time.

purple and blue, could be seen, even as far as Dindymus in distant Phrygia and the Bithynian Olympus.

Eresos was one of the five cities founded in Lesbos by the adventurous Æolians who, at the dawn of history, had migrated hither from Thessaly, Bœotia, and other areas of Greece north of Athens, and had brought their civilization and their gods with them. Apollo, Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, Demeter, Aphrodite, Athena, and many other members of the Greek pantheon were here worshiped; but because of the richness of the soil in that luxuriant plain which extended back in a wide bay to the inland mountains, the earth-goddess Demeter—the Ceres of the Romans—had become the most popular divinity of the neighborhood.

In the spring and at harvest time there were great rejoicings in Eresos, and in every household a pig was killed in Demeter's honor. A four-days' festival, called the Thesmophoria, was dedicated to her; and during this time the young married women daily gathered together to celebrate the mysteries of sex, but at home rejected the attentions of their husbands, and sat about on little heaps of cooling herbs, eating cakes of sesame and honey and thinking pure thoughts.

Hermes, too, was here an outstanding power amongst the gods, partly because of an ancient connection he had with the earth's fertility, and partly because of his especial regard for the corn-trade, which was the city's chief source of revenue; and pigs were sacrificed to him also, together with the first lambs of the springtime and the whitest of the loaves of barley bread. Poseidon, whom the Romans called Neptune, was another of the city's most revered gods, as was natural in a community so closely connected with the sea; and on his holydays black and white bulls, rams, and wild boars were slaughtered in his honor at the edge of the waves.

Two little rivers, turbulent except towards the end of

summer, ran down from the mountains to the sea; and the soft tamarisks which lined their banks were the home of many birds, and provided shade both for the herds of goats and for the unseen but clearly apprehended Naiades, or river-nymphs, who loved the sound of running water and the singing of birds, and, indeed, themselves sang sweetly, too. Red-flowering oleanders here grew wild; and in spring the violets, hyacinths, and anemones carpeted the ground. These rivers passed at length into the sea across the sandy beaches not far from the city; and in the moonlight the Nereides, the beautiful nymphs of the sea whom Doris, daughter of Ocean, bore to her brother Nereus, could sometimes be heard calling to the river-nymphs their haunting salutations.

Here and there in the cornfields there were groups of oaks, planes, and other trees, amidst which on summer nights the nightingales sang; and around every homestead were plantations of apple, quince, fig, pomegranate, and almond. On the slopes of the hills around there were vineyards which produced a wine said by Galen, the great physician of antiquity, to be "most sweet and fragrant"; but higher up, amongst the bare rocks, there were forests of pine, amidst which the steep highroad to Mitylene wound its way, watched from above by eagles and vultures continuously circling in search of food.

Down in the vineyards and the cornfields there were innumerable partridges whose call could be heard across the plain, blending in the dreamy air with the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, the singing of the larks, the notes of the shepherds' pipes, and the occasional far-off barking of a dog or braying of a donkey. These sounds you may hear today in this time-forgotten plain, though Eresos has vanished and only the modern little town three miles inland perpetuates the name; and the nearer air is now, as it always was, full of the sound of the humming of bees and insects, the

rustle of the wind in the trees, and the rhythmic sighs of the sea. North of Eresos, Cape Sigrion ran out into the blue water in a rocky headland which screened the further view from the town; and concealed beyond it lay the city of Antissa, one of the five most important in the island, famous as the home of the poet Terpander. Along the coast-line for a mile or more on either side of Eresos stood the now lost villas of the nobles and men of wealth, the white buildings being protected from the ocean breezes, and, indeed, half concealed, by the dark cypresses, the sycamores, and the other trees within their walled gardens. In one of these houses, it may be supposed, was born the immortal Sappho, or Psappha as she was called in her own Æolian dialect.

Of the name of her mother, Kleïs, there is no doubt; but her father's name, perhaps because he died young, has not been so certainly remembered. Suidas, in his Lexicon, gives a list of eight names by which he had found this personage called in the authorities he had consulted. These are Skamandronymos, Skamon, Simon, and Semos; Eurygyos (Erigyios) or Euarchos; Eunominos; and Ekrytos. The scholiast, or marginal commentator, on Pindar, calls him Eurygyos; but Ælian [25] names him Skamandronymos; so too does the scholiast on Plato's *Phædros;* an anonymous papyrus of about A. D. 200 says he was called Skamander or Skamandronymos; [26] while Herodotus,[27] the nearest to Sappho in time, speaks in another connection of her brother, Charaxos, as being the son of Skamandronymos.

Nothing is known of these parents of the "Tenth Muse," except, by deduction, that they belonged to the aristocracy of Lesbos, and thus, it would seem, claimed descent, like the other Lesbian nobles, from Penthilos, son of Orestes, son of

[25] Ælian: *Varia Historia,* xii, 19.
[26] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, I, 1.
[27] Herodotus, ii, 135.

Agamemnon. Probably Skamandronymos, as we may call him, was a young man in the early twenties and Kleïs a girl still in her 'teens when Sappho was born; and during the following six years three sons made their appearance—Charaxos, Eurygyos, and Larichos.

But when Larichos was still a baby [28] and Sappho but six years old,[29] the peaceful life of Eresos was disturbed by the outbreak, in 606 B. C., of a war which for ten years was to be the chief concern of all the five cities of Lesbos. Some time previously the Lesbians had established a trading-base at Sigeum, a seaport at the Ægean end of the Hellespont, ten miles northwest of ruined Troy, and about sixty miles by sea northeast of Eresos; but now the merchants of Athens laid claim to Sigeum, and their countrymen decided to fight the matter out with the Lesbians.

Already in Homer's day the island of Lesbos—or, more exactly, Eresos, which, being on the west coast of Lesbos, faced Athens across the Ægean Sea—had been, as has already been said, a place of call for those who were making the journey between Greece and the Troad; [30] and in this war Eresos must have become a point of great strategic importance and one which had to bear the brunt of the Athenian attack. All its fighting-men were called to arms, and those who were not retained here to defend their homes in view of a possible invasion were shipped off to the Hellespont to hold Sigeum against the Athenians.

Lesbos at this time had no central government, each of its five principal cities being in control of its own affairs; but Mitylene, as the largest of these cities, was now naturally given the leadership in this crisis which had obliged the whole island to unite, and thenceforth the Mitylenean authorities

[28] He was the youngest: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, 1.
[29] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv, 61.
[30] *Odyssey,* iii, 169.

remained the rulers of all Lesbos. The aristocratic party was in power there; but this noble oligarchy, abandoning in the hour of danger its traditional exclusiveness, now appointed a certain rough soldier of no ancestry as commander-in-chief.[31]

This man was the afterward famous Pittakos, then some forty years of age,[32] who owed his appointment chiefly to his friend Drakon, one of the Mitylenean nobles—if we may so interpret a fragment of a poem of Alkaios.[33] Pittakos was a heavily bearded, untidy, and somewhat unwashed soldier of fortune,[34] the son of a Thracian who had married a Lesbian woman; but he was hard-working, brave, and gifted, and was, it would seem, in every way a match for the Athenian general Phrynon, whose chief claim to fame was that he was a successful pugilist.

In one of the first engagements of the war it may be conjectured that Sappho's father, Skamandronymos, was killed; for Ovid, evidently following a now lost authority, makes her say [35] that she was "six years of age when the parental bones were watered before their time with her tears." Kleïs, the widow,[36] with her four children seems then to have betaken herself for greater safety to Mitylene, on the other side of the island, for Sappho is so often described as a Mitylenean [37] that one must suppose the family to have migrated thither when she was still young. And thus it came about that by the chance of war the girl became a resident of that

[31] Diogenes Laertius, i, 74.
[32] Diogenes Laertius, i, 77.
[33] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 6, 9–11.
[34] Diogenes Laertius, i, 81.
[35] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv, 61.
[36] She was alive in Sappho's childhood. *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1787, i, 15.
[37] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, 1; Herodotus, ii, 135; Scholiast on Pindar; Scholiast on Plato; *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 14, and ix, 66; etc.

city of which she was, in the peaceful times which followed, to become the pride and glory.[38]

[38] The generally accepted date for the war between Lesbos and Athens is 606–596 B. C., (Smith's *Classical Dictionary,* etc.) and Ovid's words provide an interesting sidelight on this date in its relationship to the date of Sappho's birth. Herodotus (v. 94) says that the war lasted "very many years"; but the known facts in the life of Pittakos (as recorded by Diogenes Laertius), and those in the life of Alkaios (as deduced from *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 6, 7; Strabo, xiii, 600, 617; etc.) limit it fairly closely within that period, 606–596 B. C., and the chronology of events in Athens best fits in with that dating.

Chapter Two

SAPPHO'S GIRLHOOD AT MITYLENE

MITYLENE was a larger and much more important city than Eresos, and in the time of Horace was deemed a place of beauty worthy to rank in that respect with Rhodes and Ephesus and Corinth. In Sappho's day, of course, the plan of the town was more simple and the buildings were less elaborate than those the Roman poet saw; but the superb setting of mountains and sea was the same, and it was, indeed, the situation rather than the work of architects and masons that gave the city its distinctive splendor. The acropolis, or citadel, around which the oldest houses were clustered, and the agora, or forum, on its western side, were placed upon a little island separated from the mountainous Lesbian mainland by a narrow channel of water, known as the Euripos, or "Strait," spanned by bridges of white stone, beyond which the newer parts of the town were built, these latter covering the seashore and the lower slopes of the hills behind. To-day this waterway is filled up, and the main street of modern Mitylene seems to mark the forgotten course of it, so that the island has become a peninsula; but in the time of Sappho these bridges over the Euripos were the only link between the two parts of the city, the old and the new, and in crossing them the citizens could pause in the sunshine to admire the two vivid blue harbors, one at either end of the channel.

The northern harbor, the larger and deeper of the two, was protected by a powerful masonry breakwater, of which some traces still remain, and was used by the fishing boats, the

merchant ships, and the vessels which plied between Lesbos and the opposite coast of Asia Minor, ten miles away. The southern harbor, though smaller, was capable of sheltering a fleet of fifty ships of war,[1] and was protected by two fortified moles, the course of both of which can still be discerned to-day beneath the clear water.

Away to the south the seashore was dotted with the houses of the well-to-do, each standing in its own luxuriant garden, and each having its own well from which the water was drawn up by a chain of earthenware pots connected with a large wooden cog-wheel pulled round and round by a donkey or an ox. The creaking of these wheels, like a wandering song without end, was carried on the breeze to the city, where it blended in a drifting undertone with the murmur of the sea and the louder noises of the streets.

There were tree-shaded houses, too, upon the slopes which passed up to the rugged screen of the high hills behind; and from the ravines near the summit little streams of water in winter-time ran splashing down amongst the rocks, discharging themselves at last into the sea below, while in summer their dry beds of white bowlders and gravel, bordered by oleanders in full flower in May and June, could be traced in their devious courses down the hillsides, now passing along beside the steep bridle-paths, now losing themselves amongst the silver-pale foliage of the olive groves or the denser growth of private gardens, and now crossing the open spaces where dark cypresses stood here and there like sentinels amongst the scattered fig-trees, the pomegranates, the myrtle, and the bay. Higher up, where these torrents began their downward rush, the rocky ground was rich in mountain shrubs and flowers and aromatic plants; and the scent of them was like incense upon the delicate air of the uplands.

Every afternoon the sun passed early behind the wall of

[1] Strabo, xiii, 2. See also Diodorus, xiii, 77.

the hills; and the houses of the town, ablaze with sunshine in the morning, lay in shadow for some hours before darkness fell, the citadel on its substantial little island being the last building to be touched by the warm rays and thus being for a short while each day an edifice of gold placed like a crown upon the blue-veiled city. But the prevailing north wind which blew freshly through the streets of Mitylene until the going down of the sun, generally sank in the twilight, and the nights were warm in summer and usually mild in winter.

Vitruvius,[2] who lived in the time of Julius Cæsar and was an authority on town-planning, complains that in winter this north wind was here so cold at times that it was not pleasant to stand about in the exposed parts of the city, while there was no protection in summer from the hot wind from the south; and the visitor to-day may have occasion to echo his ancient complaint. Yet, on the whole, the climate is ideal; and though there is occasional rain, though, as Alkaios says in one of his poems,[3] the mountain streams are sometimes frozen and the cold winds whistle, the city must have enjoyed then, as it does now, for the greater part of the year a seemingly endless succession of those cloudless days when sea and sky appear almost incredibly blue and the heat of the sun is tempered by the freshness of the breeze, when across the water the hills of the mainland of Asia Minor are sharply defined in the clear, clean air, and on the Lesbian mountains behind the city the trees stand out with surprising individuality to the very summit, where, indeed, along the skyline they can be counted one by one.

The country to right and left of Mitylene was magnificent to behold and very pleasant to wander in, particularly because the view across the sea to the coast of Asia Minor was

[2] Vitruvius, 1, 6.
[3] Athenæus, x, 430.

supremely beautiful, comprising as it did the whole sweep of mountainous country from Mount Ida and the Troad in the north to the Tmolus range above Smyrna in the south. Along the Lesbian seashore there were many small bays and tiny harbors sheltered amongst the rocks, and on the rugged slopes just above these sandy little coves there were groups of pine-trees, or there were olive-groves spreading up the hillsides, this eastern side of the island being very rich in olive-trees. In the dappled shade beneath them, with the blue sea on the left hand and the blue sky above, one could walk southwards all the seven miles to Cape Malea, the southeast limit of the island. Northwards, through other olive-groves, the road passed along to Thermæ, a small town ten miles from Mitylene, where there were hot, medicinal springs under the patronage of the goddess Artemis, and where an important annual festival was held in her honor which has survived to the present day in the guise of the feast of Saint Constantine.

Behind the hills which shut off Mitylene from the west there was a great inlet of the sea, ten miles long and three or more wide—the Gulf of Hiera; and at its head, just above the reedy swamps where in summer the air was full of the hum of insects and the dragon-flies darted about in their thousands, stood the fishing village of Hiera which afterwards became a considerable town. There were hot springs here too, at the foot of the hills which encircled the blue and lakelike waters of the gulf; and above the line of the marsh there were forests of chestnut-trees beneath which, in the spring, the ground was carpeted with violets and with anemones—white, pink, crimson, and purple. The place must often have been the goal of a day's excursion from Mitylene; and the road thither, over the hills and down into the valley, was crowded with holiday-makers at the time of the Dionysia, the great festival of Dionysos, which in Lesbos was the year's chief event.

West of this inlet towered the Lesbian Olympus, a mountain over three thousand feet in height, whose bare and rugged peak of white marble, snow-capped in winter, rose majestically against the blue of the sky. The people of Mitylene and the neighborhood were wont to ascend to the heights of Olympus at the festival of Zeus, the road winding its way upwards through well-timbered valleys filled with giant plane-trees whose trunks were gnarled and twisted into grotesque shapes, and thence passing over the green pasture-lands where wild flowers grew in profusion—notably the blue squill and the yellow gagea. Higher up there were forests of pine, amongst which in the keen, scented air, the fallow deer ran free; and looking down from the clearings amidst these trees one could see to the east the still waters of the Gulf of Hiera far below, and to the northwest those of another deep inlet, the Gulf of Pyrrha, with the city of that name at its head.

Pyrrha was set upon a precipitous hill reflected in the waters of the inlet, with olive-groves around it and oaks and pines above, and was famous for its shellfish [4] which were gathered on the beach and in the shallows, and for its wild duck which congregated in the reeds along the shores of the gulf. The city was one of the five most important in Lesbos; but a journey of sixteen or seventeen miles by road separated it from Mitylene, and, like Eresos, it led its own individual life. So, too, did the city of Antissa which, from Olympus, could be seen to the north of Eresos, beyond Cape Sigrium; and the same was to be said of Methymna, a city on the northern shore of Lesbos, twenty miles to the north of Olympus. Methymna was second only to Mitylene in importance, and stood in the most fertile part of the island, its vineyards being famous and its wine highly praised by the connoisseurs of Mitylene. It was built in a succession of terraces mounting up

[4] Aristotle: *History of Animals*, v, 10, 2.

the slope of the hills, and upon the heights above stood the acropolis overlooking the city.

From Olympus a magnificent view was to be obtained of the adjacent countries of Asia Minor. The mainland just opposite Lesbos was known as Æolis, having been peopled by those same Æolians who had colonized Lesbos; and their eleven chief cities,[5] which were strung along the coast, had banded themselves into an Æolian league, the citizens meeting together once a year at Smyrna, some sixty miles south of Mitylene, to celebrate their annual Pan-Æolian festival which also drew thither many of their Lesbian kindred. Smyrna was originally the twelfth city of the league, but it had now joined itself to the Ionian confederacy, to which reference will presently be made. All twelve of these cities could be seen from the heights of the Lesbian Olympus—friendly cities, speaking the same Greek dialect as the Lesbians spoke, and having the same customs; but behind them the foreign lands of Mysia and Lydia stretched away into the eastern distance, the latter having as its capital the rich and famous city of Sardis, at the foot of the Tmolus Mountains, eighty miles southeast of Mitylene.

Along the coast of Asia Minor south of Æolis there were ten Ionian cities which, with Smyrna and the island cities of Chios and Samos, formed an Ionian confederacy,[6] corresponding to the Æolian league, and which celebrated an annual Pan-Ionian festival at the temple of Poseidon on the promontory of Mykale, opposite Samos. Like the Æolians the Ionians were colonists from Greece; but they spoke a dialect different from the Æolian, and their customs were not altogether the same. Some of these cities could be seen from

[5] The names of these eleven Æolian cities were:—Ægirusa, Ægææ, Grynea, Killa, Kyme, Larissæ, Myrina, Neontichos, Notium, Pitane, and Temnos.

[6] See Chapter Twelve.

Olympus, or at any rate the hills which formed the setting of some of them could be distinguished on the distant horizon; and still further to the south, almost beyond the reach of the eye, was the land of Caria, off the farthest coast of which lay the island of Rhodes. Hereabouts there were several Doric colonies, but of these I will speak later.

Such, then, were the surroundings in which the little Sappho found herself when she and her mother and infant brothers had made the journey of thirty-five miles from Eresos to Mitylene along the road through the pine forests of the uplands, at that time busy with the coming and going of armed men and military couriers. It is likely that the family made its new home in the house of some male relative who became a second father to the children; for such a circumstance would account for one, at any rate, of the alternative parental names—Skamandronymos being probably the name of Sappho's real father, and Eurygyos possibly that of the uncle or kinsman under whose care she may have been brought up.

The state of war which existed throughout her childhood, and the consequent danger of Athenian raids upon the coast, may well have caused the villas along the seashore to be deserted; and we may with more probability picture Sappho's new home as being situated on the slopes of the hills behind the city, the house standing, perhaps, in one of those romantic gardens which overlooked the town, the terraces being rich in flowers and trees and commanding beautiful views across the sea whereon the Lesbian ships of war moved to and fro in constant expectation of battle.

We do not know at what age Æolian girls were regarded as marriageable, and it may be that, as amongst the Dorians, they were not expected to marry until they were about twenty; but at any rate, Sappho does not appear to have been in any haste to find a husband. The eligible young men, of course,

were for the most part away at the war or otherwise engaged in the service of their country at this time of its danger,[7] and a bridegroom, perhaps, was in any case not easily to be acquired. Moreover Sappho was not possessed of the kind of beauty likely to attract an ordinary youth: one tradition,[8] in fact, has it that she was really ugly. Her eyes and hair were blacker and her skin more swarthy than the Greek fashion of the time approved; and she was so small as to be hardly fitted for motherhood. "If surely Nature has denied me beauty," Ovid [9] makes her say in later years, "I balance the deficiencies in my appearance by my brains. . . . Small I am, but a name which fills all the world is mine." And the scholiast on a passage in Lucian [10] describes her as "very ill-favored, being small and dark, like the nightingale whose tiny little body is covered by unlovely plumage."

There is, however, a kind of "ugliness" which to the discerning eye is quite as attractive as beauty; and when Nature breaks all the canons established by man as the standard of perfection she sometimes creates an irresistible novelty, infinitely intriguing because it is individual and unmatched. Sappho, as we shall presently read, is said to have had a very sweet smile; and in certain lights her black hair seemed to have that purple-blue hue in it which the Greeks described as being like dark violets. Evidently her charm lay also to some extent in her elusive grace and her delicate poise, and in a certain adroitness which the French call *chic*.[11] It seems clear that she was exceptionally dainty and fastidious; [12] and when

[7] As is stated in a fragment of Alkaios, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1233, 8, 5–12.

[8] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1800, 1.

[9] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum*, xv, 31.

[10] Lucian: *Portraits*, 18. Maximus of Tyre (xxiv, 7) also calls her "small and dark."

[11] Cf. Athenæus, i, 38.

[12] Cf. Athenæus, xv, 35.

these qualities are combined, as in her case they were, with a deep and smoldering passion, luminous in her eyes and so freely revealed in her verses that it has been said of her that "her utterance was mingled with flames," [13] the conventional canons become of little account. The intrinsic beauty of her diminutive figure may have been concealed at this early age from the ordinary young warriors of Lesbos; but yet, with Swinburne, one may speak of that "small, dark body's Lesbian loveliness that held the fire eternal," and still offer no denial to the tradition that she was "very ill-favored."

There was one man in Mitylene, however,—a bearded youth of aristocratic blood [14]—who made the discovery that her developing womanhood was capable of stirring the male heart; but, as is to be expected, he was a personage of exceptional character. He was the afterwards famous poet Alkaios, or Alcæus, as the Romans called him, who was a few years older than she was, and had lately returned from the war in some disgrace. When hard-pressed in an engagement under the walls of Sigeum, he had flung away his arms and had taken to his heels, and the Athenians had carried his richly ornamented shield to the local temple of Athena and had triumphantly hung it up as a trophy before the altar.

He was a happy-go-lucky young man, however, and he had sent home to a friend in Mitylene, where his family lived, an amusing letter written in verse, in which he had said: "Your Alkaios is safe, as you see by this, but not his arms: his unconquerable shield, in fact, the Athenians have hung up before the goddess of the Blue Eyes" [15]—a confession which provides perhaps the earliest known instance of those joking references by brave men to their own unsoldierly behavior

[13] Plutarch: *Amatorius,* xviii.

[14] That he was still a youth is shown by a fragment of a poem of his: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 6, 7–13.

[15] Strabo, xiii, 600; Herodotus, v, 95.

which have become popular in modern times as a corrective of cheap heroics. He was not by any means a coward, and, indeed, in after years he proved himself to be a hot-headed patriot always involved in rebellions and always in the thick of any political trouble which happened to be afoot; but, like many men of brains, he had no very strong sense of pride or dignity, and the picture of himself running for his life was evidently preferable in his opinion to that of his dead body lying upon the field of glory.

Cicero says [16] that he was given overmuch to love-making, and that, though he was a gallant young man, he wrote very extravagantly upon that subject; and Horace tells us [17] that he went into battle singing love-songs, and sang them, too, as he sailed the stormy seas. He drank more than was good for him, moreover,[18] and the wine got into a great deal of his poetry. In fact, when he was not denouncing tyranny, or urging his countrymen to fight for that socially impossible condition termed Liberty, his verses were all about wine and love.

Being a man of this temperament he began now to find in the strange little Sappho, whom he had probably known for some years, that compelling attraction which others, more obtuse, had overlooked; and one day he wrote her a brief but fully significant letter, again in verse, which read: "Innocent Sappho of the violet-hair and the sweet smile, I should like to tell you something, but shame prevents me."

Sappho, however, was not much attracted to him, and had evidently heard such tales of his amorous adventures that she was not flattered by his overtures. She seems to have been a girl of conspicuous modesty at this time, and she replied,

[16] Cicero: *Tusculanarum Disputationum* iv, 71.
[17] Horace: *Odes*, 1, 32, 3.
[18] Athenæus, x, 35.

therefore, in a very proper little verse which must have been one of her first compositions. It reads:

> "If what you wanted to say were proper and nice, and your tongue were not preparing something evil, shame would not possess you, but you would speak out." [19]

She was evidently rather proud of this metrical answer, which in the Greek is nicely turned, and in after years she published it amongst her poems, whereupon it became well-known as a model of what a maiden should say in reply to a would-be lover's hesitant advances, and the incident was illustrated by early artists of a moral turn of mind.

Alkaios, however, was not rebuffed, but continued to bombard Sappho with his poems, and to sing her praises in serenades and odes at every party at which he was called upon to entertain the company. Unfortunately these compositions have not survived, except, perhaps, in a fragment reading "Please, please receive, receive your serenader"; [20] but Hermesianax, an Ionian poet of Kolophon who was living three centuries later, is quoted as saying that they were delightful.[21]

The growing fame of Alkaios as a poet, and the fact that he was directing such public attention to the object of his affections, seems to have caused Sappho to become something of a personality in Mitylene, even at this early age; and when she, too, began to write some very charming poetry, the members of the aristocratic circle in which her family moved must have looked at her with new interest. Already at the age of seventeen, that is to say in 595 B. C., it appears that she

[19] Hephæstion, 44; Aristotle: *Rhetoric,* i, 9.
[20] Hephæstion, 32.
[21] Athenæus, xiii, 71.

was established as the most outstanding figure amongst the young ladies of Mitylene; and in spite of her deficiency in actual beauty her peculiar attractions were doubtless the subject of general comment. Her girl-friends regarded her as their heroine; and since the Æolian women of Lesbos enjoyed a very unusual degree of freedom, and were almost as much in evidence in society as are western women in modern times, she was enabled to take a leading part in all that was going on in the island.

Meanwhile, the war had dragged on for ten years without any definite success to either side, though the Lesbians had had rather the worst of it,[22] and everybody must have been tired of the whole business. Many of the young men had been killed, and most of those who had survived were probably anxious to marry and settle down. Sappho, however, in spite of the fame which the unrequited devotion of Alkaios had brought her, does not seem to have displayed any particular interest in the opposite sex. The war, one may suppose, had made her much more accustomed to the intimate companionship of other girls, and her fastidious nature was not sympathetic to the martial ways and military interests of the youths of her time. It was not that she disliked men—for it is to be remembered that she died in the end for love of a man; but it can readily be understood that she must have found the young warriors, hot from the war, a little too rough for her, habituated as she was by the circumstances of the time to feminine society.

Had not the period of her growth to womanhood synchronized with the ten years of war with Athens when almost all the young men of Lesbos were away fighting, the trend of her emotional life might have been quite different, and her poems might not have been burnt.

[22] Strabo: xiii, 600.

Chapter Three

THE BEGINNING OF SAPPHO'S CAREER AS A POETESS

WHEN Sappho began seriously to write poetry it may be supposed that she was influenced considerably by Alkaios, whose work was largely lyrical, that is to say written to his own musical setting—a kind of poetry towards which she herself was also drawn. At this time he had not yet composed those fiery and caustic political poems which are his most striking contribution to literature: the verses he had written and now so spiritedly sang to his minstrel's harp were concerned with the war, which had made a deep impression upon his sensitive nature, or with the excitements of his amorous adventures when he was on leave, and with the wine by which he recklessly drowned his cares both at the war and at home.

As was so often the case in those days, and as a similar tendency in modern times makes at least intelligible to us, Alkaios was capable of being more than artistically stirred by the beauty of youth in both sexes; and his wayward muse, wandering occasionally from the thought of Sappho, was inspired likewise by the grace and charm of some young friend of his own sex. "The mole on the limb of a boy delights him," says Cicero; [1] and we learn elsewhere [2] of his passionate affection for a youth named Lykos; while one of the few remaining fragments of his work [3] reads: "I bid them summon the

[1] Cicero: *De Natura Deorum,* i, 28.

[2] Scholiast on Pindar, *Odes,* ii, 15; Horace, i, 32, 9.

[3] Hephæstion, 44.

beautiful Menon, if I may have him for an additional joy at my drinking-party." He presents, in fact, a mildly pathological case; but in view of the prevalence of these tendencies at that time he can hardly be described as abnormal, and in picturing him as an elegant and well-dressed young man, with a youthful beard and an athletic figure, one need not invest his person in the mind's eye with any of those distinctive mannerisms which mark his kind to-day.

Having this touch of the feminine in him, he was profoundly affected by the great sacrifice made by the young striplings of Lesbos in the war against Athens, and in a verse addressed to the motherland, of which a few lines have survived,[4] he writes: "Now is our song of thee, great Nurse of all those immature boys who, thinking so little of themselves, went forth to battle in the first ranks of our countrymen. . . ." From the front he wrote a poem [5] to his friend Melanippos, beginning: "Drink with me and forget!—for why should I hope to return or see again the unclouded light of the sun?" "Some of these things," he goes on, "were to be endured with a patient heart; but if ever tears were unavailing, our tears are unavailing now." And in another fragment [6] he declares that the best remedy for unhappiness is to call for wine and to drink deep, "for it is bad to yield up one's heart to misfortune." "Let us drink," he cries in yet another poem; [7] "why wait for lamp-lighting time?—the day has only a finger's breadth to go. Take out the large tankards from the cupboard, dear friend, for Dionysos gave us wine to make us forget our cares." To those of us who remember the days of the great war the sentiments will be familiar.

[4] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1233, 8, 5–12.

[5] Idem, 1, ii, 8–20. Probably from the front, since another verse written to the same friend is certainly so.

[6] Athenæus, x, 35.

[7] Idem.

Another Lesbian poet of the lyric school whose work must have been read by Sappho at this time was Arion, who was born at Methymna, the second city of Lesbos, but was now living at the court of Periander, the ruler of Corinth. Not a line of his verses has survived,[8] but we know from the chronicle of Eusebius and the Lexicon of Suidas that he was already writing some ten or fifteen years before Sappho was born, and that therefore he must have been a man of middle age when she herself was beginning her literary career.

Arion's chief contribution to verse was the invention or perfection of what is called dithyrambic poetry.[9] For centuries it had been the custom to chant psalms in praise of the gods, the chorus or choir being drawn up at the altar in the grove or temple of the deity thus being honored; and in particular the worship of Dionysos was of this choral character, the largely extempore chants being led by the slightly inebriated choir-master,[10] the chorus responding in set phrases. But Arion conceived the idea of dressing up the choir of Dionysos as goat-like satyrs, of ranging them in circular formation around the altar, and of composing metrical verses for them to recite and sing, assigning certain lines to soloists and others to the whole chorus, he himself leading them to the accompaniment of his harp, for he was the finest singer and most accomplished harpist of his time.[11]

These Bacchic cantatas, or *dithyrambs,* as they were called, were of a wild and orgiastic character, and in so far as the verses related the mournful incidents in the story of the life of Dionysos the effect was so much like that of a drama that

[8] The poem ascribed to Arion by Ælian (*De Animalium Natura,* xii, 45) is much later.

[9] Proclus: *Chrestomathy,* quoted by Photius: *Bibliotheca.* Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Birds,* 1403. Suidas: *Lexicon.* Herodotus, i, 23.

[10] The poet Archilochos said he led the dithyramb best when drunk: Athenæus, xiv, 24.

[11] Herodotus, i, 23.

Arion is described by Suidas as the inventor of the "tragic mode." The stage-drama, which had not yet been devised, was a later development out of these Dionysian choral performances, the word "tragedy" originally being the *trag-œdia,* or "satyr-song" as sung by Arion's chorus-men dressed as satyrs or *tragoi,* the Greek word for "goats"; but Arion must really be regarded as the first dramatist and, in fact, the first theatrical producer, so to speak, in the history of the Greek arts, so close was his work to the kind of choral drama which we should now class as opera.

It is not surprising that Arion's genius should have expressed itself through the medium of these Dionysian services, for his birthplace, Methymna, was the center of the wine-trade of Lesbos, and Lesbian wine was said "to have no equal" and to be "the true ambrosial juice." [12] Dionysos, however, was not merely the god of wine and drunkenness: he represented all that beauty of nature which arouses the emotions and lifts human existence out of its ordinary routine. The story of his life told how he had suffered and died to bring divine happiness down to earth; and he was regarded as the gentle, tender-hearted Son of God,[13] always striving to save the world from its sorrows and to bring peace and goodwill to mankind. Indeed, this aspect of his character became so pronounced that in the early days of Christianity he was widely identified with Jesus Christ.[14]

Arion was thus not merely a singer of bibulous songs; and his verses, which must have been much read and sung in his native Lesbos, were doubtless studied by Sappho with a greater respect than was evoked in her by the less serious poems of Alkaios; and yet Alkaios was more of a self-expressionist, and

[12] Archestratos, quoted by Athenæus, i, 51.

[13] The name Dionysos is derived from *Dios,* "God," and *nusos,* "son."

[14] Chapter xxii of my *"Paganism in Our Christianity."*

self-expression was still something of an audacious novelty in poetry, which made its appeal to this young poetess who had so much to tell of her own feelings and personal emotions.

There was another great Lesbian poet and minstrel who must have influenced her: Terpander, a native of Antissa, the nearest town to Eresos where Sappho spent her infancy. He was already an old man, or was perhaps dead, at this time, for he is stated to have been at the height of his genius more than thirty years before Sappho was born.[15] Early in his career he had had the misfortune to kill somebody in a now forgotten brawl, and, being condemned to exile, had accepted an invitation to go to Sparta as a professor of poetry and music,[16] thereafter residing there in the greatest honor. He was the first poet seriously to write drinking-songs;[17] and it may be mentioned that he ended his life apparently at some drunken party, for it is said that he was choked by a fig which somebody threw at him as he was singing, and which hit him when his mouth was wide open.[18]

Only a few lines of his poetry have survived; but he is chiefly remembered because it was he who added the high octave-string to the seven-stringed harp formerly used,[19] and because he was the founder of the Spartan school of music, where, incidentally, he introduced a beautiful new rhythm afterwards known as the Terpandrean.[20]

Another lyric poet whom Sappho probably read was Alkman, who seems to have been born at Sardis in Lydia and to have lived chiefly at Sparta,[21] his date being ascribed by Suidas to about 630 B. C., and by Eusebius to 611 B. C., which in-

[15] Parian Marble, 34; Eusebius: *Chronicle.*
[16] Suidas: *Lexicon.*
[17] Pindar, quoted by Plutarch: *Music,* 28.
[18] *Palatine Anthology,* ix, 488.
[19] Aristotle: *Problems,* xix, 32; Plutarch: *Music,* 28.
[20] Plutarch: *Music,* 12.
[21] Suidas: *Lexicon; Palatine Anthology,* vii, 709.

dicates that he was probably still writing in Sappho's early life. It is said [22] that he was the originator of the Greek love-poem as a work of art, and a few fragments of this kind of verse of his have survived, wherein he speaks of his heart being melted, of the pain he endures, of Love playing a game with him, and, particularly, of his devotion to a certain golden-haired girl named Megalostrata, who was herself a writer of verse, and whose conversational powers were brilliant.

He was a fat, jovial, obscene fellow; a great glutton,[23] and very licentious in regard to women; [24] but a genius nevertheless. As age and obesity got the better of him he used to complain bitterly that he was no longer able to jump and twirl about with the chorus of dancing-girls whom he had trained; [25] and his dread was that at last he would be left lying around like a big, discarded ball.[26] In the end a fate of this sort did overtake him, for he became disease-ridden and lousy; [27] but long after he died the Spartans used to sing his wild songs set to his own wild music, and at their annual *Gymnopædia,* or "Feast of Naked Youth," the young Spartan warriors and veterans used to chant his verses as they capered about in their nude war-dances.[28] His works were finally burnt by the Church.

Like Alkaios he was a self-expressionist, and his love-poems gave a precedent to Sappho which she was very ready to follow.

The Ionian lyric poet Polymnastos of Kolophon, of whose work nothing now remains, appears to have lived at about

[22] Suidas: *Lexicon;* Athenæus, xiii, 75.
[23] Athenæus, x, 10; etc.
[24] Athenæus, xiii, 75.
[25] Antigonus of Carystus: *Historiæ Mirabiles,* 27.
[26] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 171, 7.
[27] Aristotle: *History of Animals,* 557.
[28] Athenæus, xv, 22.

this period of Sappho's girlhood, and to have worked chiefly in Sparta, his songs being written for accompaniment by the flute instead of the harp.[29] He is described as a very merry fellow,[30] thoroughly obscene,[31] but a fine musician, who played about with fractions of semitones, and used the enharmonic scale with great effect in the settings of his verses.[32] He was one of the successors of Thales, who himself followed Terpander as director of the Spartan school of music.[33] Thales hailed originally from Crete, but, unlike Polymnastos, he wrote in a very grave and lofty style.[34] Nothing has survived of his work, but doubtless his poems were read by Sappho, for he was probably still alive when she was young.

All the above were lyric poets, and hence musicians, whose verses were intended to be sung to their own music; but mention must be made also of Mimnermos of Smyrna, a melancholy Ionian poet of the elegiac school, whose poems were written to be recited with a soft musical accompaniment on the flute. He was at the height of his career when Sappho was a child, and she must have read with sympathy his two books of verse which he had dedicated to the hard-hearted girl who used to accompany him in the minor key on the flute, a certain Nanno, with whom he had fallen hopelessly in love. He was the first to use the elegy—which was primarily a lament sung to the flute—for personal love themes instead of for mournful or reflective subjects of a national or religious character; and, indeed, he was held in the highest esteem as a love-poet.[35] Love, he said, was life's only con-

[29] Plutarch: *Music,* 3, 5, and 9.
[30] Hesychius: *Glossary.*
[31] Suidas: *Lexicon.*
[32] Plutarch: *Music,* 29.
[33] Pausanias, i, 14, 4; Plutarch: *Music,* 9.
[34] Strabo, x, 48.
[35] Horace: *Epistles,* ii, 2, 100.

solation: in other respects man's short day was not worth the living, what with its briefness, the instability of happiness, his helplessness, and the misery of his old age.

In Athens there was an annual feast named the Thargelia at which in early times a man and woman were led out of the city and put to death as a human sacrifice on behalf of mankind. The terrible procession to the place of execution was accompanied by a weird and peculiar melody played upon the flute, and known as "the fig-tree tune" because the victims were beaten with twigs of that tree as they were dragged along; and something of the bitterness of Mimnermos may be gathered from the fact that he used this ill-omened tune as the accompaniment to several of his poems.[36]

One other poet who was still enriching Greek literature at the time when Sappho was preparing to do so, must also be mentioned: namely, Stesichoros of Himera in Sicily. According to Suidas he was born between 632 and 629 B. C., and thus was some twenty years older than Sappho, but seems to have outlived her. In some respects he may be described as the forerunner of the Greek novelists, for he wrote long and romantic narrative poems about the deeds of the heroes, in which his character-drawing is said to have been very fine,[37] and his language beautiful and stately.[38] His style was epic and was based on Homer, but he is to be classed amongst the lyric writers because he set these epics to music,[39] and arranged them for chorus-work, in which, indeed, he was so successful that for that reason he was called Stesichoros, "Chorus-Master," his real name being Teisias.[40]

[36] Hipponax.

[37] Quintilian, x, 1, 62; Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Criticisms of Ancient Writers,* ii, 7.

[38] Plutarch: *Music,* 12; Horace: *Odes,* iv, 9, 8.

[39] Plutarch: *Music,* 3.

[40] Suidas: *Lexicon.*

These, then, were the immediate influences on Sappho's education in poetry; but in spite of the early era in which she lived there were also several other books of poetry then in circulation, written by the great masters who had preceded her. There were Homer and Hesiod, of course, the latter having lived two and a half centuries before Sappho's time, and the former at least a century earlier than that; but their work, being epic, was detached and impersonal and can hardly have made so direct an appeal to her as it did to men—to men, that is to say, who liked to hear the tales of the martial deeds of their ancestors and national heroes recited in stately and sonorous phrases.

The works of two early lyric writers—Eumelos of Corinth, who lived about 750 B. C., and Olympos of Phrygia, who, in about 700 B. C., brought the flute of his native land into musical recognition in Greece—must have been read by her with more interest; for the lyric was always the most personal and the most impassioned form of Greek poetry, and thus the most able to evoke an answer from her own full heart, itself so eloquent but as yet so unladened. Olympos, by the way, is said [41] to have invented the enharmonic scale, the notes of which were E, E a quarter-tone up, F, A, B, B a quarter-tone up, C, and E again—the scale which was used in Sappho's day by Polymnastos.

Kallinos and Tyrtæos, too, she probably read. The former had lived at Ephesus the best part of a century before she was born; but his Ionian countrymen still sang his martial songs by which he had incited the men of his day to resist the attacks of the Lydians whose seaboard they had colonized. He was regarded in ancient times as the first poet to introduce the *elegos,* or elegy, into Greece as an art-form, that having originally been, it would seem, a sort of lament sung to the soft and doleful notes of the Lydian flute which the Ionians of

[41] Plutarch: *Music,* 11 and 29.

Asia Minor had adopted from the people they had dispossessed. Tyrtæos was also an elegiac poet, but was writing a generation later than Kallinos, and had worked for the most part at Sparta. He was only a lame little schoolmaster, but his war-songs had set all the Spartans marching.

One of the most famous of the small group of poets who lived before Sappho's time and whose works were assuredly read by her was Archilochos, an Ionian of the Ægean island of Paros who migrated to the less hospitable island of Thasos, but spent a great part of his life roving the seas in search of fabulous treasure. He was living more than half a century before Sappho was born; but his published work must have appealed very greatly to her, for to such an extent did he bare his soul in his poems, first as the ardent lover of a girl named Neobule, and afterwards as her most bitter enemy, that he is to be regarded as the first of the Greek poets whose personal character may be read in his poetry. There was a very frenzy of rage in his later verses; [42] and it was he who first popularized the iambic style, the *iambos* being a sort of satire, full of invective and stinging ridicule, half sung and half spoken to the accompaniment of a particular kind of harp.

One other of Sappho's forerunners must be mentioned—Simonides, a native of Ionian Samos, the island city off the coast of Lydia, who migrated to Amorgos, another Ægean island, and there composed his verses at a period but a few years later than that of the prime of Archilochos. He, too, used the iambic style, and his best-known composition in it is a satire on women, in which he compares the spiteful woman to a cat, the talkative woman to a barking dog, the cunning woman to a fox, and the woman of untidy habits to a pig.

The bare names of a few other poets whose work Sappho may have read are known; but it is to be remembered that she herself was among the earliest creators of Greek poetry, and

[42] Horace: *Ars Poetica*, 79.

that her unequalled genius developed and flourished with astonishingly little to lead up to it. The famous poets and dramatists who brought Greek literature to such widespread fame were not yet. Æschylos, the actual founder of tragedy, was not born till 525 B. C. Pindar, the great lyrist, not till 522 B. C., when Sappho had been dead a generation. Sophocles and Euripides, the famous dramatists, were born respectively in 495 and 480 B. C.; Aristophanes in 448 B. C. Sappho stands almost at the source of the long stream of lyric writers; and out of her own passionate heart, her own exquisite sensibilities, her own perfectly working brain, came the main volume of her inimitable contribution to literature, unhelped in any noticeable degree by any heritage of the past.

Her verses were never pretentious, as they might have been had she striven to live up to a standard set before her time. They were simple, natural, magical with the clear beauty of new things, as are the hues of the Ægean dawn or as are the days of youth. Their charm is so elusive that one looks in vain for its cause, precedent, or parallel. "We read a few simple words," says Mackail,[43] "simply put together; we admire them and pass on; and then we find that there is some witchery in them that makes us go back, and again back, and yet again back, to try to find what it is in them that moves us so."

The ancient critics did not rank her with any group of poets: they deemed her the Tenth Muse, the daughter of Aphrodite and Eros, the nursling of the Graces, the companion of Apollo; and we to-day who have only a few fragments of her work left to us by the detestable Church of the Dark Ages can yet appreciate this estimate, for so perfect are these fragments that, to use the words of Symonds,[44] "we

[43] J. W. Mackail: *Lectures on Greek Poetry.*
[44] Symonds: *Studies of the Greek Poets.*

muse in a sad rapture of astonishment to think what the complete poems must have been."

In about 596 or 595 B. C., when she was sixteen or seventeen years of age, the war between Lesbos and Athens passed into a condition of stalemate, apparently owing to the fact that the Athenians had obtained possession of the town of Sigeum itself, but were blockaded therein by the Lesbians, who, however, had little hope of ousting them. The situation was depressing for both sides; and when it was proposed that an armistice should be declared and that the quarrel should be submitted to an arbiter, the two armies agreed to this course, and hostilities ceased.

Chapter Four

PERIANDER OF CORINTH, ARBITER BETWEEN ATHENS AND LESBOS

IT HAS already been remarked that the Lesbian poet Arion, the famous author of the dithyrambic songs of Dionysos, was living in these days at the court of Periander, the aged Tyrant, or Ruler, of Corinth; and when the armistice between the Lesbians and the Athenians was declared it may have been at the poet's instance that Periander was invited to act as arbiter between them.[1] He, Periander, was one of the outstanding figures of the age, who had already been called in, it would seem,[2] to arbitrate in a dispute between Lydia and Miletus; and his friendships and alliances were so widespread that his arbitration in this case also was deemed acceptable by the two tired nations, neither of whom wished to go on fighting.

Corinth, which was some two hundred miles southwest of Lesbos, had recently risen to a position of great importance in the commercial world, and the Corinthian merchant ships and ships of war were to be found on all the seas around. The city was being built up just now at a great rate, and everywhere temples, public edifices, and private mansions were springing into existence. Its geographical situation was of the greatest value to it, for Corinth stood back from the sea on high ground commanding the narrow isthmus which separates northern from southern Greece, with the Gulf of

[1] Herodotus, v, 94.
[2] Busolt: *Griechische Geschichte* (2), ii, 466.

Corinth on the west side, leading into the Ionian and Adriatic Seas, and the Gulf of Argolis on the east, opening into the Ægean. There were two ports: Kenchreai (Cenchreæ) on the Ægean side, six or seven miles from Corinth, and Lechaion (Lechæum) on the other, a mile and a half from the city; and at this time both these harbors were full of shipping, Periander's renowned triremes [3]—battleships of three banks of oars—being always in evidence, anchored in orderly lines.

On the south side of the city, rising some fifteen hundred feet above it, towered that tremendous rock upon the dizzy summit of which stood Acrocorinth, the sacred citadel, whose lamps at night-time looked like lights in the windows of high heaven. From the city itself the distant view in the day's clear atmosphere was splendid, but from the heights of Acrocorinth it was dreamlike to a degree unsurpassed in all Greece. Forty-five miles to the north, across the blue waters of the Gulf of Corinth, rose the double-headed Parnassus, catching the full sunlight of the afternoons and daily made golden thereby. At an equal distance to the east was Athens, backed by the Hymettus range. Sixty-five miles to the south, on the far-off horizon, rose the mountains around Sparta; and to the west those of enchanted Arcadia, in the heart of the Peloponnesus, could be seen.

Below the precipitous northern face of Acrocorinth lay the agora, or forum, of the city, overlooked by the new temple of Apollo which Periander was building, this being placed on the north side of the agora and facing south towards fantastic Acrocorinth. On the west side of this temple, and approached by a descending flight of rock-cut steps, was the sacred spring, named Glaukē, so called because Glaukē, the second wife of Jason, was said to have plunged into it when the inflammable bridal garments cunningly sent to her by

[3] Nicholas of Damascus, in *Fragmenta Historicorum Græcorum,* iii, p. 393.

SKETCH MAP OF LESBOS AND THE ADJACENT MAINLAND

MODERN MITYLENE

his discarded wife, Medea, suddenly burst into flame. On the other side of the temple was another spring, named Pirene, the waters of which were directed into a series of cavelike reservoirs hewn out of the rock, and faced with a marble façade and portico, where in summertime the chief men of the city were often to be seen sitting about in the shade, and playing draughts.[4]

Corinth was famous for the number of its temples; and next in magnificence to that of Apollo was the temple of Aphrodite at the side of the paved road leading to the port of Lechaion. Vast numbers of professional courtesans lived in the houses adjoining the sacred building, and it was a matter of surprise to strangers that they were regarded with respect by the citizens, and always took part in the public prayers and processions,[5] the fact being that in the pursuit of their business they rendered service to the goddess whose sacrament was love, and were wont to call upon her name with great fervor in the more inspiring moments of their routine. Athenæus,[6] indeed, quotes a poem of Xenophon addressed to these prostitutes of Corinth, in which he calls them the hospitable ladies, the willing ladies, the fairest company of soft Persuasion, the ornament of the city, and its comfort and hope in time of danger, by whose good offices "men may reap, in the delicate beds of Love, those longed-for fruits of happiness that are lovely and necessary to all mortals." St. Paul, however, in his Epistle to the Corinthians,[7] was hot in his denunciation of these "hospitable ladies" who still in his time plied their ancient and here sacred trade with undiminished energy.

The country round about Corinth was rocky and infertile,

[4] Euripides: *Medea,* 68.
[5] Athenæus, xiii, 32.
[6] Athenæus, xiii, 33.
[7] I *Corinthians,* vi, 15–18, etc.

but, by reason of its maritime commerce, the city was rapidly becoming one of the most wealthy in the world; and from the earliest times one of its chief deities was Poseidon (Neptune), god of the sea, in whose honor the Isthmian Games were held every third year.[8] The city was so famous, too, for its pottery, tiling, and metal-work that it was regarded as the originator of these arts actually borrowed from Egypt, Crete, and the Orient. It was a potter of Corinth who had invented the potter's wheel, so it was said;[9] and the beautiful painted vases which we now know as Corinthian, and which are often found in excavations in Greece, Italy, Sicily, and the Near East, largely date from this period.

This was the age of the first introduction of the coinage into Corinth, the Corinthian coins being stamped with the figure of the winged horse, Pegasus, who, according to the legend, was first bridled while he was drinking at the city's celebrated spring of Pirene. Coins, it should be mentioned, were originally pieces of gold, electrum, or silver cut to a handy weight—which weight represented their value—and stamped with a distinguishing design; and their use in place of weighed-out measures of metal seems to have originated in Lydia, in Asia Minor, and thence to have passed into Greece. We are so accustomed nowadays, however, to money in this form, that it is not at once apparent that the invention of the system was a tremendous advance in the facilities of commerce, and was one of the outstanding achievements of the period with which we are concerned.

Periander (or Periandros, as he was really called) was the son of Kypselos, the son of Æetion, and an interesting story is told of his grandparents. Æetion, who was a man of no social pretensions, had married a lady named Labda, who was a member of the old Doric ruling house of Corinth, she

[8] Pliny (*Natural History* iv, 5) incorrectly says every fifth year.
[9] Pliny: *Natural History*, vii, 57.

being, to tell the truth, both lame and so ugly that nobody in her own set had regarded her as a possible wife; but when Kypselos was born to them her noble kinsmen, outraged at her marriage outside their circle, made an attempt to have the child put out of the way, and on one occasion she only saved his life by concealing him in a chest—a story which, though vaguely reminiscent of the tales related of Moses and other ancient heroes, has no glaring improbabilities about it. This chest, which was made of cedar-wood, inlaid with ivory and gold and ornamented with figures in relief, was afterwards presented as a work of art to Olympia, and is described by Pausanias, the famous geographer of the time of Marcus Aurelius.[10] But when Kypselos had grown to manhood he had his revenge, for he led a rebellion against the nobility, expelled them from Corinth, and having, as Aristotle puts it, made his way through demagogy to tyranny, established himself as Tyrant there in 657 or 655 B. C., and, dying in 627 or 625 B. C., left his throne to his son, Periander, already a man of middle age.

Periander[11] was an artistic and intellectual personage, noted both for his learning and for his virtue, and his rule, as befitted a scholar, was at first mild and exemplary; but, being exasperated by the political treachery of some of his former supporters, he sent one of his chamberlains over the Ægean to his old friend, Thrasybulos, Tyrant of Miletus on the coast of Asia Minor, asking his advice as to how a man of culture should deal with disaffection. The messenger put the question to the Tyrant at a time when they happened to be strolling in the cornfields; but Thrasybulos would not reply: he only smiled, and casually struck off the tops of the tallest

[10] Pausanias, v, 17.

[11] For the life of Periander, see Herodotus, iii, 48; v, 92; Aristotle: *Politics*, v, 6, 10; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, i, 7; Nicholas of Damascus; Heraclides Ponticus; etc.

ears of corn with his walking-stick. Periander, however, when this action was reported to him, accepted it as a full answer to his inquiry; and thus it came about that, in a brief vacation from the school of virtue, he beheaded all the leading politicians of Corinth.

His throne was thus secured, but he was not a happy man, and the remainder of his life, though publicly illuminated by wisdom and good taste, was privately darkened by domestic troubles. His wife, whom he loved to distraction, was Melissa, daughter of Prokles, Tyrant of the neighboring state of Epidaurus, and she presented him with a daughter and two sons, Kypselos and Lykophron; but when for the fourth time the much loved woman became pregnant it was whispered to him that she had been unfaithful, and that her unborn child was not his. Maddened by jealousy, and recalling now that she had seemed lately to be very cold to his advances, he so far forgot himself as to hit her; but a miscarriage followed and she died. He found out afterwards, of course, that the story against her had been false, and his grief was overwhelming; but his father-in-law, Prokles, would listen to no excuses, and only prayed for an opportunity to avenge his daughter.

Lonely, distressed, and tortured by remorse, Periander at length made an attempt to get into touch with the spirit of his unfortunate wife, and under pretext of another purpose sent a trusted friend to consult the oracle of the dead at Thesprotia in Epirus, where in a grove of oaks the whispering of the wind was officially interpreted to the visitor by two or three old women known as the *peleiai,* or "wood-pigeons." On this occasion these women declared that the ghost of Melissa, shivering with cold, had appeared to them, and, wringing her hands, had said that she had no clothes, the dresses which had been buried with her ashes being of no use because they had not been burnt in the funeral pyre and

had not thus been given spiritual existence in the world of shadows. As proof that it was really she who spoke, the spirit mentioned some private words which, she said, Periander would recognize: "The oven is cold when I bake my bread in it"—perhaps a simile used by him in one of those quarrels with her in regard to her seeming indifference to him, which may have led up to the final tragedy.

Periander remembered the words and knew that none but Melissa herself could have offered that intimate proof of identity—a bitter proof, too, having about it a cruel suggestion that he was unforgiven. Like everybody of his time he believed unquestioningly in the dim world beyond, wherein the spirits of the dead were dependent on the comforts supplied them by the living through the medium of prayers, magical formulæ, offerings, and all else that appertained to the transmutation of words and things into spiritual actualities; and he therefore made up his mind to give Melissa such a wardrobe as never a spirit had had before. Every lady in Corinth, he felt, ought to contribute to this gift; but there was the danger that if he were to ask them to do so they would hand over for the purpose only their second-best dresses—their old clothes, in fact.

In this dilemma he hit upon a brilliant stratagem, which had the added attraction to him of being in conformity with the principles of an anti-luxury campaign lately initiated by him. He issued a proclamation calling upon all the married women of the city to attend a great fête in honor of Hera, the patron goddess of the female sex, whom the Romans called Juno; and when they had assembled for this purpose, dressed in all their finery, his agents politely but firmly stripped them almost to the skin, and made a great bonfire of all the beautiful garments thus collected, the priests dedicating them to Melissa as the flames leapt up.

It was a despotic act, and one which must have caused him

to be cursed with every imprecation ready to woman's tongue; but he was able to justify himself to the ladies' husbands on the grounds that something drastic of this sort had been called for as a check upon extravagance, and it was probably at this time that he formulated that wider legislation against luxury and idleness which was a feature of his reign. He forbade the excessive employment of slaves—a measure which was perhaps due to his wish to protect small business from being undersold by firms employing unpaid slaves, or sweated labor, as we should now call it; and he relieved the wealthy of their surplus gold, says Suidas, by demanding huge contributions by them to a golden colossal figure which was to be a public ornament of the city. Obviously these actions were unpopular, and it is significant that he never dared to move about without the protection of an armed bodyguard.

He devoted himself, after this, to the building up of the financial resources of the city. He gave every encouragement to industry, and relieved it of all burdens by abolishing the heavy taxation imposed by his father.[12] He dealt with the matter of unemployment by finding work for thousands in roadmaking and other public improvements, and by establishing colonies abroad for the surplus population; and he restricted the influx of the peasants into Corinth. Meanwhile, he issued exhortations and moral advice to his subjects in the form of maxims written in verse, a collection of no less than two thousand such verses being attributed to him. His foreign policy was strong without being aggressive; and a reputation as a military leader was earned by him in several small campaigns.[13]

The years passed, and when Kypselos was eighteen and

[12] Aristotle: *Œconomica,* ii, 1346.

[13] Aristotle: *Politics,* vii, 1315; Nicholas of Damascus, in *Fragmenta Historicorum Græcorum,* iii, 393.

Lykophron seventeen, their grandfather Prokles invited them to stay with him, and saw to it that they enjoyed themselves so much that both the boys came to regard him with great affection. They had been brought up to believe that their mother had died a natural death; but Prokles from time to time hinted darkly that this was not the case, and, just as they were leaving him, gave them to understand—though he never said so directly—that she had been murdered by their father. "Well, at any rate, you boys can now guess who caused your poor mother's death," were his last words to them; and though the remark did not disturb the elder youth, Kypselos, who was a heavy and brainless young man, it thoroughly upset Lykophron, and set him brooding and worrying all the way home.

When they reached Corinth once more Periander was dismayed to find that Lykophron, to whom he was devoted, would not speak to him. He suspected, of course, what had happened, but when he questioned him as to how much Prokles had said, the boy would not reply; and Periander, in a burst of anger, kicked him out of the house. He then turned to Kypselos, and after cross-questioning the bewildered young man very closely, at last obtained the rather hazy admission that Prokles had certainly seemed to be accusing somebody or other of murder.

Periander was deeply hurt at Lykophron's inability to understand that Melissa's death had been one of those accidents which are always likely to happen when husbands love their wives to distraction; and he sent peremptory orders to the people with whom the young man had gone to stay, commanding them to turn him out. Others, however, at once took him in, and Periander was at last obliged to issue a proclamation stating that anybody who gave the boy shelter or even spoke to him should be obliged to pay a fine, the

money to be handed over to the priests of Apollo for the building of the great temple then in process of erection.

For the next four nights the sullen youth slept in the public porticos, and went by day unwashed and unfed; but on the fifth morning Periander could stand the distress of it all no longer, and, pocketing his pride, sought an interview with him. "Now, which is better, my boy," he said to him,[14] "to be in the state you now are in, or to be heir to my crown and everything I possess on the one condition that you give in to your father? You see that though you are my own child and the chosen heir of this rich city of Corinth, you have brought yourself to a beggar's life, because you oppose me and treat with hostility one whom it least befits you to resist. If there has been a calamity, and you are angry with me on that account, remember that I, too, feel it and am the greatest sufferer, since it was by me that the thing was done. But now that you know how much better it is to be envied than pitied, and how dangerous it is to indulge your anger against parents and superiors, come back home with me!"

Lykophron, however, merely told his father that he, Periander, had himself now incurred the penalty of the fine by speaking to him; and therewith the elder man reluctantly abandoned his efforts for peace, and gave orders that the boy should be sent away to live in the island of Corfu, which was then a dependency of Corinth. No sooner was he gone, however, than Periander declared war on Prokles, the obvious author of the trouble, and having successfully invaded Epidaurus, hounded the mischief-maker down, and at last captured him, and locked him up in prison.

In the ensuing years Periander's fame for wisdom and justice spread all over the Greek world, and he was so generally

[14] The words are given by Herodotus, and though they are hardly likely to be more than that author's own composition, they doubtless convey the sense of the interview correctly enough.

admired that later generations acclaimed him—though not quite unanimously—as one of the Seven Wise Men.[15] He was an enlightened patron of the arts, and not only did he employ Arion of Lesbos and other poets at his court, but he also gathered the available brains of the world around him, the brilliant Anacharsis of Scythia, who at that time was exciting general admiration, being one of his guests. Some of his wise sayings are recorded by Diogenes Laertius, amongst which are the following: "Pleasures are transitory, but honor is immortal"; "quietness is a good thing"; "practice accomplishes everything"; "be the same to your friends when they are in difficulties as when they are prosperous"; "punish not only those who do wrong but those who intended to do so"; "whatever you agree to do, do."

But when old age had come upon him Periander, who had never ceased to care for his exiled son, sent to Corfu, inviting him to come back and to take over the business of government, since Kypselos had proved himself to be a complete fool, quite unfitted to inherit the throne. Lykophron, however, refused even to speak to the messenger, and thereupon Periander sent his daughter to Corfu to try to drive reason into her brother's obstinate head.

"Do you want the kingdom, brother, to pass into strange hands, and our father's money to be made the prey of others, instead of coming home yourself to enjoy it?" she is reported by Herodotus to have said to him. "Come back home with me, and stop punishing yourself! There is nothing to be gained by this obstinacy: why do you try to cure evil by evil? Mercy, remember, is set above justice by many people; and, anyhow, many sons while championing their mothers have forfeited their fathers' goodwill. Power is a slippery thing to hold, and it has many after it; and our father is old and

[15] Plutarch: *Moralia,* 385; Plato: *Epinomis,* 2; Dion Chrysostom, xxxvii, 456.

weighed down with his years. Do not let your inheritance, then, be seized by another."

Lykophron would not listen to her: he only said that so long as his father were alive he would never come back to Corinth. Periander, wounded by his son's inexorable hatred, then sent another messenger to Corfu, pathetically offering to retire, himself, to that island, if Lykophron would come home and reign in his stead; and to this his son at last agreed. But the people of Corfu did not at all relish the idea of having Periander in their midst, for his character had been irreparably damaged by Lykophron, and he was regarded as a kind of ogre; and for this reason, as Herodotus suggests, or, more probably owing to their wish to claim their independence and rid themselves altogether of the yoke of Corinth, they suddenly turned upon Lykrophron and assassinated him.

This tragic ending of the feud between father and son seems to have occurred not more than a year or two before the close of the war between Athens and Lesbos. Periander was infuriated with the perpetrators of the deed; but he was averse to bloodshed, and he therefore decided to punish the islanders by an action which, while horrible enough, would have about it a touch of religious solemnity. Alyattes, the King of Lydia, the country on the mainland of Asia Minor opposite Lesbos, was a friend of his; and Periander had apparently heard that there was a dearth of priests of the god Attis, one of the patron deities of Lydia, caused by the understandable objection of the young men of that kingdom to be unmanned, the priests of Attis being all eunuchs.

Periander therefore sent a body of troops over to Corfu with orders to seize three hundred of the young sons of the nobility of the island, and to ship them off to Lydia to be made into sexless priests of Attis, as a friendly gift from him to King Alyattes. The boys were duly collected and carried off, but when the vessels which were conveying them to their

unpleasant doom touched at the island of Samos, south of Lesbos, the Samians took pity on them and arranged for them to take refuge in the local temple of Artemis (Diana), where, by their ancient custom, they could not be molested without sacrilege.

Their Corinthian escort therefore picketed the temple with the object of preventing food from being conveyed to the boys; but the Samians outwitted them by organizing daily processions in honor of the goddess, in which each participant carried cakes of sesame and honey ostensibly as offerings at the altar, but actually intended for the boys. This continued for several days, while the mob's hostility to the Corinthians grew ever more pronounced until at last they abandoned their charges to their fate, and sailed away. The good people of Samos then shipped the boys back to Corfu, and Periander eventually dropped the matter, admitting that the Samians had had the laugh of him.

He was now a man of over seventy,[16] embittered and unhappy; and it was at this time that he was invited to settle the quarrel between Lesbos and Athens. The judgment which he gave was simple: he decreed that each side should remain in possession of the territory it held at the time of the armistice; and thus Sigeum became the property of the Athenians, and the Lesbians retained but a footing upon the shores of the Troad. It was a settlement of the dispute very unsatisfactory to Lesbos; but anything was better than the interminable dragging on of the war, and peace on these terms was signed and sealed.

[16] Diogenes Laertius says that he died at the age of 80, and the date of his death is known to have been about 587 or 585 B. C.

Chapter Five

ATHENS AND THE RISE OF SOLON

THE city of Athens, or Athenai, as it was then called, which had come off so successfully in the war with Lesbos, was already one of the rising powers in the Greek world, for it was now the capital of the whole of Attica, a region fifty miles long and from eight to forty wide; and yet there was no visible evidence at this period that it would one day be the very center of historic Greece. None of the temples which in our time constitute its most famous ruins had yet been erected; and the glories of Athenian architecture and sculpture were still to be. Sappho, one has to remember, lived in what is known as the archaic age; and the summit of perfection in lyric poetry was attained by her in Lesbos several generations before it was reached in the sister-arts by the men of Athens and elsewhere whose names are still household words to-day. In her own work, she was like a first beautiful blossom of spring, unsurpassed by all the flowers of high summer; but in her time only the early buds were visible on Athenian soil.

Athens stood back from the sea in the midst of a broken and rugged plain seven or eight miles wide, lying in humps and valleys between two ranges of mountains which passed down from the northeast, this plain being watered by the rivers Eridanos, Kephissos and Ilissos—torrential streams in winter but in summer nearly dry. These natural ramparts of the mountains were bare and gray-looking, having little vegetation upon them other than scattered gorse-bushes and clumps of thyme; but the scenery, nevertheless, had grandeur,

and in the clear and peculiarly luminous air for which this region is celebrated the hard, gaunt horizon-line presented an impressive if not an exceptionally beautiful panorama. To the east, forming that wall of the plain, ran the long, gray range of Hymettus from behind which the sun came up each morning; and a little farther to the north rose the majestic Pentelikon mountain, nearly four thousand feet high. On the other side of the plain, the west, was the Ægaleos range passing down to the Bay of Salamis, where, across the narrow straits, rose the hills of the island of that name, behind which the sun went down. To the southwest lay the sea, with the mountains of Ægina and distant Argolis visible on the far side; and in the background to the north the more wooded Parnes, loftier than the others, marked the frontier between Attica and Bœotia.

The city—at this time a cluster of small, white houses opening on to crooked streets, with here and there a brightly painted public building fronted by a paved open space—stood in a part of this craggy, uneven plain where the rocks ran up into a group of rough and precipitous hills, of which the highest had been chosen as the site of the citadel or Acropolis. Its summit, over five hundred feet above sea-level, was shelving and in parts more or less flat, and comprised an area eleven hundred feet long from east to west and some five hundred broad. Here, in a grand and lofty isolation, there had been room for the main portion of the original settlement; but now the city had spread southward towards the sea, northward, and also westward where the two rocky hills, the Areopagus or Hill of Ares (*Areiou-pagos*), and the Pnyx, were dotted with buildings, those on the Pnyx rising in terraces all over the seaward side, their back chambers hewn out of the rock.

The agora, or forum, seems to have been situated in a depression on the north of the Areopagus and the northwest of

the Acropolis; and from it there was a winding way which led to the west end of the latter hill, that being the only side on which it was not precipitous, whence by a narrow path and by rock-hewn steps the citizens could ascend to the flat summit. Crowning the Acropolis—for the Parthenon was not yet built—stood the ancient but frequently repainted temple of Athena, the patron goddess, within the area enclosed by the mighty old walls of the original citadel; and in this temple still stood the crude, archaic statue of the goddess, a revered relic of the legendary days of old. There must have been other temples, too, on these sacred heights; but hardly a trace of them now remains, though numerous statues of painted stone have survived to give us some idea of the ornamentation of their precincts.

A stairway led down to the famous spring, Klepsydra, at the northwest corner of the Acropolis, overlooking the agora; and from this spring the water was obtained which supplied the citadel. Another celebrated spring, Kallirrhoe, ran out of a rocky ridge in the bed of the Ilissus, some distance to the southeast of the Acropolis; and here the girls of Athens obtained the water used by them in the traditional bath before marriage which was a relic of primitive and less cleanly times. But Athens was poorly supplied with water in the season when the rivers were dry, and cisterns and reservoirs were hewn out of the rock on the Acropolis and the Pnyx and elsewhere to catch the rain and to hold the surplus obtained from the rivers at their full. The climate, however, was good if the water-supply was not; and even in the heat of summer the breezes kept the city cool.

The country round about was not very fertile, but the banks of the three rivers were covered with olive-groves, and there were plantations of fig-trees and some productive vineyards in the valley of the Kephissos. There were cornfields, too, in the level parts of the plain, and in the more rugged

areas fairly good pasturage was to be found. Athens, however, had early developed its sea-trade; and its three ports—Peiraieus (Piræus), Zea, and Mounychia, all close together—were already in these days full of busy shipping. Athenian pottery, which rivalled that of Corinth, though the famous Attic ware was still to come, was exported far and wide; and olive-oil was sent in great quantities to those lands where olive-trees were not so abundant. At first these exports were exchanged for commodities needed by the city; but now that a coinage had been devised the novel convenience of buying and selling by cash had given a great impetus to trade.

Asia Minor, and particularly the Troad, had been good customers of Athens; but for some time previous to the war with Lesbos the Lesbian merchants had made this market precarious. The trade with Corinth, too, was brisk; but between that city and Athens lay the land of Megaris, centered in the city of Megara, just on the other side of the island of Salamis, and of late the merchants of that country had been the bitter rivals of those of Athens. Megara was twenty-six miles from Athens and thirty-one from Corinth; and just as at Corinth the father of Periander had established a "Tyranny" or absolute rule, in about 655 B. C., so at Megara a certain Theagenes had made himself Tyrant probably about 630 B. C.

Athens, however, had set its face against this form of administration, and ever since it had put an end to its original monarchy it had been governed by *archons,* or "magistrates"—men of more or less noble birth who, in these days, were elected annually and were nine in number, this body being under the chairmanship of the Chief Archon, a kind of President of the city-state. Next to him was the second archon, whose duties were ceremonial and religious, it being his business to preside at all great functions; and the third archon was in command of the fighting forces. The remaining six were councilors and legislators. At the close of their term of office

these archons became members of the Areopagus, an exclusive assembly of the worthies of the city which met upon the hill of that name. On the neighboring Pnyx the common people held their meetings and cautiously vented their grievances, which were many; but they never got much redress of their wrongs, for their above-named rulers were landowners and men of wealth who were much more concerned with their money-making and the maintenance of their own privileges than with the welfare of the working classes.

In the year 640 B. C. a certain young Athenian noble named Kylon won an important race at the Thirty-fifth celebration of the Olympian Games,[1] and having thus become something of a hero in the eyes of the citizens, turned his attention to politics. Some years later, at the height of his popularity, he married the daughter of Theagenes, the Tyrant of Megara; and when he had reached middle age he made an attempt to set himself up as a Tyrant of Athens, this being just at about the time when Sappho was born.[2] The rising failed, however, and though he himself escaped, his friends found themselves besieged on the Acropolis, where they had sought sanctuary in the temple of Athena.

The Chief Archon at the time was Megakles, a member of the famous family of the Alkmæonidæ; and this man promised the rebels a safe conduct if they would leave their sanctuary and come across to the Areopagus to stand their trial. This they agreed to do, but they took the precaution of tying a long cord to the statue of Athena and of carrying the other end with them, so that technically they might still be in touch with their divine protectress even when they had left her sacred precinct.

[1] Eusebius, i, 198.

[2] 612 B. C. is the year usually given for the rising, but the date is uncertain.

THE RUINS OF THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO AT CORINTH, WITH ACROCORINTH IN THE BACKGROUND

A SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE CHIEF PLACES CONNECTED WITH SAPPHO

Cautiously they descended the pathway down the west slope of the Acropolis, holding this cord; but when they had reached the foot of the Areopagus hill a hundred yards or so away, and were close to a deep cleft in the rocks which was the traditional home of the Eumenides, or Furies, they gave a rash tug to the cord to straighten it out, and broke it. Now these Furies, who were terrible black goddesses, daughters of Night, with serpents twined in their hair and blood dripping from their eyes, were the relentless enemies of those who had offended against the laws; and the fact that the cord broke just at the mouth of their awful abode caused Megakles to suppose that Athena had handed the miscreants over to their doom. He therefore gave the order that they should be butchered there and then, and those who managed to escape back to the Acropolis were killed in the very sanctuary of Athena.

Kylon, however, as has been said, was a very popular figure, and it was not long before his well-wishers brought an accusation of treachery and sacrilege against Megakles which in the years to come developed into a superstitious taboo upon the whole family of the Alkmæonidæ. Throughout the period of the war with Lesbos this ostracism continued; and it is in the culmination of the scandal that we obtain our introduction to the great Solon, an Athenian noble who had been born in 638 B. C., and was now a man of about forty. In about the year 597 B. C. he persuaded the ostracized family to stand their trial; but in spite of the great efforts made to rehabilitate them they were pronounced accursed, and the whole lot of them were banished from Athens, even the bones of their ancestors being dug up and sent beyond the frontiers of the state.

It was then decided to purify the city, so deeply had the treachery of Megakles and the breaking of the sacred law of

sanctuary impressed the citizens with a sense of evil-doing, and so conscious were they of a burden of ill-luck resting upon them. Many of their finest men had been killed in this seemingly endless war with Lesbos, and lately a great disaster had befallen them, for the island of Salamis had been seized by the people of Megara while the Athenian troops, I suppose, were away fighting the Lesbians; and so hopeless was Athens of putting up a successful fight for its recapture that a law was passed forbidding anybody on pain of death to agitate for its recovery. The authorities felt, in fact, that with the Lesbian war still on their hands, their own working classes seething with discontent, and this curse upon them, of which the latest manifestation had been a devastating epidemic of some kind, it would be madness to attempt to fight Megara. The first thing to do was to lay the wrathful ghost called up by the impiety of Megakles.

Now in the island of Crete at this time, in the ancient city of Knossos, there lived a long-haired and wrinkled philosopher of incredible age, named Epimenides, who, according to the popular story, had in his youth taken an afternoon nap one day in a cave amongst the mountains and had slept for fifty-seven years, returning at length to his home, like Rip Van Winkle, to find his friends and relatives all dead or grown old. The true story, as his biographer [8] indicates, was that he had secretly left the country for a number of years, and had occupied himself with the study of the roots of plants, apparently in a search for the secret of life; but the tale enhanced his reputation for mystic knowledge, and his wild appearance, the obvious immensity of his age, and the truth of some of his predictions, lent a certain credibility to it. In after years he was classed by many as one of the Seven Wise Men, being included in the list at the expense of Perian-

[8] Diogenes Laertius: *Epimenides.*

der of Corinth [4] whose right to be ranked as one of the Seven was not always admitted.

His great reputation caused the Athenians now to invite him to come to Athens and to conduct the ceremonies of purification upon which they had decided; and he very kindly accepted the invitation, refusing any fee for his services. He had made a profound study of the subject of human and animal sacrifices, and had written a now lost book on the sacrificial ceremonies of the Cretans; [5] for in Knossos it had apparently been the custom from time immemorial to offer human victims to the spirit of the Minotaurus, the half-human, half-bovine horror who had been the monstrous progeny of the abnormal passion of Pasiphaë, the daughter of Helios, for a beautiful bull which she had saved from the sacrificial knife, and who haunted the dark chambers of the maze of buildings known as the Labyrinth. Epimenides, making use of this knowledge of how to appease the gods, officiated in Athens at the sacrifice not only of a black-and-white goat, but also of two human victims; [6] and he performed a series of other expiatory lustrations and dedicated a number of shrines to the gods, including one which was known as the Kylonion and was erected close to the home of the Furies on the spot where the followers of Kylon had been attacked.

These ceremonies were performed, says Diogenes Laertius, at the time of the Forty-sixth Olympian Games, that is to say in 596 B. C.; and the favorable ending of the war with Lesbos may well have been regarded as one of the happy results of the removal of the curse. The Athenians were now enabled to turn their attention to their other enemy, Megara, and to begin to think once more of the recovery of Salamis. But the

[4] Plutarch: *Solon.*
[5] Diogenes Laertius: *Epimenides.*
[6] Idem.

law that that subject was not to be mentioned was still in force; and it was only by the ingenuity of Solon that this difficulty was overcome.

In his youth Solon had been a somewhat dashing personage, who, says Plutarch, had employed "a popular rather than a philosophical tone in regard to pleasure," and had indulged a taste for poetry by writing a number of love poems of a light and improper character, addressed, as was not unusual in that age, to men as well as to women. Even now, in his forties, "he was not proof against beauty," Plutarch remarks, "nor had the strength of mind to stand up to passion and meet it hand to hand as in the arena—a fact which we may conjecture from his poems and from one of the laws he afterwards made, wherein he forbade certain practices to slaves and, in so doing, appears to have recommended them to freemen"—a remark which has reference to his abnormal love for his young cousin, Pisistratos, who was then a boy in his 'teens, and who, in after years, himself fell in love with another youth named Charmos.[7]

Solon was the son of Exekestides, a happy-go-lucky nobleman whose ancestral lands were situated on the island of Salamis; but partly because this island had now been lost to Athens, and partly because Exekestides had ruined himself by being too hospitable and too generous to his friends, Solon had found himself in very reduced circumstances. He was, however, a man of parts; and when the romantic young Muses which attend upon early love had abandoned him to the care of their wiser sisters who do what they can with middle age, he began to write some rather grandiloquent poetry intended to be of an uplifting nature, full of patriotic fervor tempered by common sense.

The loss of Salamis, however, preyed upon his mind and aroused in him a passion more intense than any called forth

[7] Plutarch: *Solon*, i.

by his earlier affairs of the heart; and being a man of audacious, adventurous, and even eccentric character, notorious—one may suppose—for his fine frenzies and his temperamental behavior, he suddenly decided to make use of his reputation for oddity by feigning madness and by blurting out in public all that he felt about Salamis, under the protection of this assumed condition of brain-storm—a condition which in the ancient world was usually regarded as divinely inspired. Anybody who rolled his eyes, frothed a little at the mouth, and poured forth his words in a bard-like sing-song, was sure of an awed audience, and was sure, too, of escaping punishment for the expression of forbidden sentiments.

He therefore composed a wild poetic call to arms, and, having committed it to memory, ran out one morning into the agora, grimacing like the madman his carefully circulated story had declared him to be; and, when he had gathered a crowd, he recited this stirring appeal to them with all the impassioned fervor of a holy lunatic. "I am a herald come from Salamis the fair," the poem began; and as it ran to a hundred verses in length, its recitation was, to say the least, a fine feat of memory. The boy Pisistratos, stationed for the purpose in the crowd, led the applause, and spread the opinion that this *tour de force* was a message to them from Heaven; and by the end of the performance everybody was shouting for war.

Solon, however, allowed it to be supposed that his divine ecstasy had now cleared his system; and being once more regarded as a sane man, he advised a sudden raid on the island which should be followed not by war but by arbitration. The raid was successfully carried out by night, and when Salamis was once more in Athenian possession a message was sent, with the bewildered Megarians' approval, to Sparta, inviting that state to act as arbiter in the dispute, just as Corinth had been arbiter in the quarrel between Athens and Lesbos. Sparta, much flattered, accepted the office, and sent five

judges to decide the matter, before whom Solon argued the Athenian case so eloquently that judgment was given in favor of Athens.

In the year 594 B. C.[8] Solon was elected Chief Archon, and thereupon he turned his attention with characteristic enthusiasm to the formulation of a new code of laws which had as their main object the appeasing of the discontent of the lower classes. He was a man of broad mind and generous character, and his sympathy with the downtrodden masses was very genuine. His father, when he had lost his fortune, had taken to a roving life as a merchant, and in his company Solon had traveled much, and had come into close contact with people of all classes and many nationalities, his views being thus widened and his consciousness of injustice to the poor so excited that he was now itching to give the Athenian working man a square deal.[9]

The first step he took was that of declaring void all existing mortgages on land, and of restoring to the peasants any piece of ground which had been seized by their creditors, whom he compensated, it is to be supposed, out of state funds. It had been the custom for a loan to be advanced also on the security of the borrower's person, he being sold into slavery if he could not pay up; but Solon made this illegal, and liberated all those who had thus forfeited their freedom. At the same time, however, he turned a deaf ear to the excited cry of the poor that the estates of the rich ought now to be cut up into small holdings: he took from the wealthy only such lands as they had acquired in the above manner, and left them in possession of all those to which they could advance a more ancient or more just claim.

[8] In the 3rd year of the 46th Olympiad. Diogenes Laertius: *Solon.*

[9] For his laws and views, see his biographers, Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius; Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens,* and *Politics;* Herodotus; Diodorus; Pollux; and others.

He then established a Council of Four Hundred, which was a senate or parliament elected by the people; but he left the Areopagus as a sort of upper house, though in the matter of administering justice, which had been their ancient prerogative, he limited their power by instituting trial by jury, the jurymen being drawn by lot from all classes. The fact, too, that the members of the Areopagus, though belonging only to the landowning classes, were ex-archons, and that the archons were elected by public vote, gave a theoretically democratic character to this assembly, even though in actuality it was aristocratic and conservative.

His miscellaneous laws covered the whole range of life's eventualities literally from the cradle to the grave; and he seems to have probed so thoroughly into the private affairs of all classes of society that not even a man at dinner, or his wife in bed, or the dog in the kennel, escaped his legislation. Having a romantic turn of mind he did his best to discourage all marriages not inspired by love, and he abolished the system of the trousseau and the dot, permitting no bride to bring to her new home more than a few pieces of furniture and three changes of clothes.

He had no very high opinion of women, and in Athens, in fact, the position of women was never much better than it was in the Orient. He would not permit any of them to go out at night except in a carriage or carrying-chair accompanied by an escort bearing a lamp or torch; but he pitied the wife neglected at home, particularly when she was not beautiful and had been wedded for those family or business reasons which he was trying to discourage as the basis of marriage, and he made a law that in such cases the husband should indulge the lady's conjugal inclinations at least once a week, because, he said, these intimacies tended to check the small estrangements which might otherwise develop into actual rupture.

He did not think that well-to-do women ought to display their good fortune in the streets where the envy of their less fortunate sisters might be aroused; and he therefore made a law forbidding them to wear expensive clothes in public or to carry market-baskets above a certain size. He was lenient in regard to crimes of passion, and recognized a man's right to kill his wife's lover if he caught him in the act; and he only decreed a fine in the case of a man who had seduced a woman, the size of the fine being diminished in accordance with the degree of encouragement he could prove that he had received from her. Houses of prostitution were sanctioned, but were under strict government supervision.

A father had the right in his old age to demand his maintenance from his legitimate sons; but Solon did not allow him to make any such claims upon his illegitimate children, for their birth had been merely incidental to his pleasure. He compelled every father, however, to teach his son a useful trade, and to train him in the way he should go; and in matters of politics he insisted that every man should vote for one party or another, neutrality at public elections being punished as a crime. He encouraged home industries and home consumption of their produce, and provided inducements for foreign artists and craftsmen of ability to settle in Athens; and he curtailed the export of all goods except olive-oil, of which there was a superabundance.

When he was asked how he proposed to make the people law-abiding he replied with a remark which deserves to be remembered at the present day. "Those who are uninjured by a crime," he said, "must be taught to feel as much indignation at it as those who *are* injured." "Learn to rule," he also said, "by learning to submit to rule." And, "Consider your word of honor, as gentlemen, of more weight than an oath."

In after years he was regarded as one of the Seven Wise Men, and as the very founder of Democracy; and in his own

day he was so much beloved that he was urged by the people to make himself Tyrant of Athens, but this he refused to do. "Tyranny is a fair estate," he said, "but there is no road down from it."

In connection with Sappho he is interesting to us not only because his regulations in regard to women illuminate by contrast those obtaining amongst the Lesbians, the women of Lesbos being as free as the men, whereas their Athenian sisters were treated as wholly inferior beings; but also because there was enough of the poet and the erratic artist in him to make him on that account and apart from his statesmanship an outstanding figure in Greek history. In his later life we shall find him amongst the most ardent admirers of Sappho's work.

Chapter Six

SAPPHO AND THE TYRANTS OF LESBOS

THE only Lesbian leader who came back from the war against Athens with any honor appears to have been the commander-in-chief, Pittakos, who was now a man of about fifty years of age.[1] At some time during the fighting he had challenged the Athenian commander, Phrynon, to a duel; and that personage, having once been a famous pancratiast, that is to say an expert in that mixed art of wrestling and boxing which was called *pankration,* had accepted the challenge. In 636 B. C. Phrynon had won a contest of this kind at the Olympian Games, at which it had figured as a popular event in the program ever since 648 B. C.;[2] and the fact implies that his strength and quickness were then phenomenal.

But he must now have been a man of over fifty, and these qualities, if they had yet survived the ravages of the years, did not serve him in his duel; for Pittakos employed the methods of the later *retiarii*—the Roman gladiators who used a net with which to entangle their opponents—and, going out to meet the Athenian champion with such a net concealed behind his shield, quickly lassoed the astonished man with it, and ran him through while he was struggling to free himself. The trick was apparently regarded as fair play—just as was the equally questionable trick played on Goliath by David, who, it will be recalled, hit the gigantic Philistine

[1] For the chief events in the life of Pittakos see Diogenes Laertius, and the fragments of the poems of Alkaios.

[2] Pausanias, v, 8.

with a well-aimed stone while the unfortunate champion was waiting for the little imp to come within striking distance of his sword; and Pittakos, like David, received the hearty congratulations of the army.

When the peace so disadvantageous to Lesbos was signed there seems to have been an outbreak of discontent in Mitylene. The nobles were doubtless accused of having bungled the war, and a certain Melanchros seized the opportunity to make himself Tyrant, following the example of Kypselos in Corinth, Andreas in Sicyon, Theagenes in Megara, Thrasybulos in Miletus, and others, all of whom had established this form of government—typical of this particular age—in their native cities. The word *tyrannos,* Tyrant, means simply a Lord or Master, but the characteristic of this kind of ruler was that he was placed in power by the people in a revolt against the aristocratic oligarchy, but governed as an absolute and hereditary monarch. A Tyrant, in fact, was a Napoleon in miniature, risen from the ranks and raised by popular acclaim to newly royal sovereignty; and one after another the Greek peoples were finding their popular leaders—usually wealthy business men—and, amidst the scornful jeers of the overthrown nobles, were doing obeisance to them as though they had been royal by birth and ancestry.

In our own day we have seen a very plague of Dictators, and in Sappho's day there was this similar epidemic of Tyrants, for the most part worthy men after their own lights, but subjected to such abuse by the aristocratic historians of later days that the name "Tyrant" came to be synonymous with "Oppressor"—a meaning which originally it did not possess. Melanchros of Mitylene was the latest of these commercial autocrats to be enthroned as ruler of the city of whose politics he had obtained control; [3] and, like all these Tyrants,

[3] It is usually thought, on the authority of Suidas: *Pittakos,* that the rule of Melanchros preceded the war with Athens, but it seems to me

he seems to have had both the masses and the big employers behind him.

His reign, however, was brief. Pittakos, who still remained the loyal protégé of the overthrown oligarchy, was set on to him by them; and, with the help of the elder brothers of the poet Alkaios, raised a rebellion and dethroned him. Alkaios, himself, did not take part in this disturbance, for he had reason to regard Melanchros as a man "worthy of his country's respect," as he says; [4] and in consequence he found himself in the bad books of Pittakos, who, in any case, can hardly have had much liking for the young man who ran away at Sigeum and who was still [5] much more concerned about his love for Sappho than about politics.

The nobles' renewed lease of power, however, was as brief in duration as had been the rule of Melanchros; and in about 594 or 593 B. C. another adventurous politician, Myrsilos, son of Kleanax, proclaimed himself Tyrant,[6] apparently with the approval of Pittakos,[7] who now at last had broken away from the aristocratic party, and was acting on his own. Thereupon the more reckless elements in fashionable society began secretly to plot and plan the downfall of the upstart, and soon

to be more probable that he rose to power after the war and the references to him by Diogenes Laertius and in a fragment of Alkaios (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1234, 6, 7.) do not contradict this. In this fragment Alkaios states that he was too young to remember the time when Pittakos was honored by Drakon (apparently in being made commander in the war against Athens in 606 B. C.); but he goes on to say that Pittakos who overthrew Melanchros is now setting himself up as a Tyrant, a remark which rather suggests that the fall of Melanchros was recent. Diogenes Laertius says that the elder brothers of Alkaios helped in the overthrow, but if this event occurred before the war with Athens there would have been an improbable disparity between his and his brothers' ages.

[4] Hephæstion, 84.

[5] Athenæus, xiii, 71.

[6] Heracleitus: *Homeric Allegories*, 5.

[7] *Berliner Klassikertexte*, v, 2, 12; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1234, 2, i, a.

Alkaios and his brothers were deep in a murderous conspiracy in which, also, they had involved their friends and relatives amongst the ladies of Mitylene. In some way which is now forgotten Sappho, now nineteen years of age, was introduced into the plot; and for many a week she must have followed the routine of her daily affairs carrying concealed about her, like a dangerous pet, this unquiet secret that quivered against her heart.

The plot, however, was discovered; and Alkaios and his brothers, together with Sappho and all the other noble conspirators, male and female, were summarily ejected from the city and were ordered to take up their residence at Pyrrha,[8] the town on the top of the rock overlooking the inlet of that name, in the middle of Lesbos. Here for perhaps a year or more Sappho lived in exile, while Alkaios occupied his time and eased the pressure of his boiling anger by writing scurrilous verses about Myrsilos and his supporter, Pittakos —particularly about the latter. No longer might he, Alkaios, look upon the daylight, he prayed, if Myrsilos and Pittakos were permitted to live; [9] and he amused his friends by calling Pittakos old "cracked-toes," because the skin of his feet had become hard and callous through lack of care, and was as scarred with fissures as old leather.[10]

Pittakos, however, was a man of great common sense and political acumen; and when the rule of Myrsilos had become intolerably oppressive, and in some now forgotten scene of violence he had been killed, he, Pittakos, did not climb across the dead man's body to the empty chair of state, but turned to the people to learn their views as to what should be done with the exiles,[11] who at the moment were toasting one an-

[8] According to the scholia.
[9] *Berliner Klassikertexte*, v, 2, 12.
[10] Diogenes Laertius, i, 81.
[11] Aristotle: *Politics*, 1285, a, 33.

other in good Lesbian wine and were enthusiastically celebrating the death of the Tyrant. "Now is the time to get drunk, the time to make love, now that Myrsilos is dead!" wrote the incorrigible Alkaios; [12] and this being their temper, the question of their future was no easy one.

The people responded by appointing Pittakos to the exceptional office of *æsymnetes,* or Dictator, for the special purpose of dealing with these excited exiles at Pyrrha; [13] and thereupon it appears that he gave them permission to return to Mitylene,[14] deeming it wiser, no doubt, that they should be close under his eye than at a distance from him. Thus, probably in the year 592 B. C., Sappho came back to her native city, her age being now about twenty. It seems that she was not yet married; but in view of the later opinion in regard to her moral character it may be questioned whether she was still the innocent girl who had administered the classic rebuke to the first advances of Alkaios. Thrown amongst this hot-headed group of aristocratic conspirators, and living with them the hand-to-mouth existence which had been theirs at Pyrrha—a life full of clandestine meetings, midnight councils, and the solemn drinking of damnation to their enemies, it may be thought that, as the future poetess of love, she could hardly have survived these first few years of her early womanhood without experiencing that about which she wrote; and yet the extreme fastidiousness of her nature is not to be overlooked, and it may be that there was no response yet in her heart to the overtures of the other sex.

It is, however, in keeping with what we know of her character and the vicissitudes of her career to suppose that she was now the life and soul of the returned company of

[12] Athenæus, x, 35. See Edmonds: *Lyra Græca,* i, p. 348, note 4.
[13] Aristotle: *Politics,* 1285, a, 33.
[14] Their subsequent exile was called their *second* banishment. *Parian Marble,* 36.

fashionable exiles—an elusive sprite of a young woman, as dangerous as small, the moving spirit with Alkaios in that restless life of secret plots and adventures and alarms which was throbbing beneath the surface of Mitylenean affairs at this time. It is true that her poetry reveals no trace of political interest; but the fact that she was soon singled out for punishment by Pittakos is a clear indication that she was deeply involved in the continued conspiracies of the disgruntled aristocrats.

In the year 591 B. C.[15] Pittakos caused himself to be proclaimed Tyrant, this full sovereignty superseding the office of Dictator which he already held;[16] and it seems to have been at this time[17] that he strengthened his position by contracting a marriage with the sister of that same Drakon who in 606 B. C. had influenced the nobles to appoint him commander-in-chief in the war against Athens.[18] The lady, being a member of the old aristocracy, is said to have given herself great airs, and to have treated her plebeian husband as somebody quite beneath her; but he was mightily proud of his noble bride,[19] in spite of the fact that she was already advanced in years, was overdressed and painted up to hide her wrinkles, and had once been so notorious for the number of her lovers and the abnormalities of their behavior that the ribald Alkaios could jokingly say of her that she had been as hammered hard and polished smooth by them as any old ship's bottom by the carpenters.[20]

[15] The year 591 B. C. is arrived at by making the date of her banishment as given in the *Parian Marble* (i.e. between 605 and 591 B. C.) comply with the statement of Diogenes Laertius that Pittakos became Tyrant about twenty years before his death in 570 B. C.

[16] Aristotle: *Politics,* 1285, a, 33.

[17] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1789, i, i, 7.

[18] The scholiast on *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 2, i.; Diogenes Laertius, i, 80.

[19] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 2, i.

[20] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1788, 4, 17, and scholiast.

"A man may give fine clothes and many trinkets to adorn an old hag," Alkaios wrote [21] in regard to her, "but he cannot hide the filth that is under them. . . . She, indeed, has not charm enough to send a coffin to its death!"—whatever that may mean. And while he thus abused this woman of his own set who had married the low-born Pittakos, he flayed that personage himself with the stinging whips of his words. He called him "Shuffle-foot," says Diogenes Laertius, because he used to drag his feet in walking; "Sausage" and "Pot-belly" in reference to his figure; and he made fun of his untidiness and dirtiness, and laughed at his ignorance of the habits of refined life—the lack of proper lights on his table at the evening meal being one of the matters to which sneering reference was made. He said that he ate his food in the dark and without discrimination, like an animal; [22] he described him as a cunning old fox who was not to be trusted; [23] and he declared that there was far too much strong wine consumed at the palace.[24]

Pittakos was, indeed, a rough diamond, but he was none the less a great and wise ruler for that. He made a determined attempt to be a good man as well as a clever one; and some of his sayings which have been preserved have not lost their point by the action of time. "Be temperate," he used often to say. "Forbear to speak evil not only of your friends but of your enemies." "There are some victories without bloodshed." These and similar aphorisms of his, to which I shall refer later,[25] became more or less proverbial in Greece; and posterity regarded him as one of the Seven Wise Men, the sum of whose wisdom was contained in the two maxims inscribed in the temple at Delphi: "Know thyself," and "Avoid

[21] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1788, 4, 17, and scholiast.
[22] Hephæstion, 68.
[23] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1234, i, B.
[24] Idem, 1234, 2, ii.
[25] Chapter Nineteen.

excess." Yet, with a sigh, he was wont to declare: "It is a hard thing to be a really good man."

One of the laws which he made is so curious that it deserves to be recorded: he decreed that a man who committed a crime when drunk should be punished twice as severely as one who had done so when sober. This was a measure directed both against those of the upper classes who, like Alkaios, were given to nightly drinking-parties, and also against the indulgences of the working classes, who were always tempted by the cheapness of the local wine. Pittakos was a great stickler for law and order, and, indeed, he wrote a now lost treatise on the subject, and also a large number of verses, apparently of an uplifting character, like Solon's; but Alkaios called him "a lute without charm." [26]

Alkaios was probably wrong in saying that he drank too much; yet one gets the impression that, like many wise men, he was a simple soul not expert in the art of elegant indulgence, and capable of draining a tankard from no more subtle motive than thirst. His cracked feet and his unbathed appearance showed his contempt for the refinements of fashionable society; and it is said that for the sake of exercise he preferred to grind the household corn than to bother himself with games and gymnastics. He cared little about money, and having inherited a moderate fortune from a brother who had died childless, he used to declare that he had twice as much as he really needed. His high-born wife, however, was not of his opinion; and it was not long before he regretted his marriage. Once, when a young man came to him with the question as to whether he should marry a girl in his own station of life or one far above him who happened to be willing to be his bride, Pittakos pointed to some boys in the street, rich and poor, who were whipping their tops along, and called his notice to the fact that each boy gave his at-

[26] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri:* 1234, 2, 1, A.

tention to his own top, suitable to his station, and was satisfied with it, rough or well-made. It seemed, says Diogenes Laertius, that he spoke from bitter experience, and that he could have wished himself possessed of a less expensive article in the person of a wife.

Alkaios says, however, that like many people of plebeian birth Pittakos took pleasure in the company of lords and ladies, and much enjoyed his right to visit their houses.[27] Indeed, he declares, there was no bearing with his presumption; while the subservience of the people towards him, and their tongue-tied fear of him, as though he were a ghostly presence they had called up at a séance,[28] was a matter for shame. It sickened him to hear the crowds "in this spiritless and unfortunate city, shouting in their thousands the praises of this low-born man"; [29] and he wrote sorrowfully of "the ruin to come," [30] and of the disasters which were at hand if the ambitions of Pittakos were not curbed.[31]

The sequel was only to be expected. An order for the arrest of Alkaios was issued; but he escaped from the city, and having fled, it would seem, to the neighboring kingdom of Lydia, returned with funds supplied by friends in that country,[32] intent on raising a rebellion. His plans having miscarried, however, he was taken prisoner, and brought before Pittakos, who showed his magnanimity or his cleverness by pardoning him, making the afterwards famous remark: "Forgiveness is better than punishment."

It appears, however, that when the extent of the conspiracy and the irreconcilable attitude of the conspirators were fully realized, Pittakos was reluctantly compelled to

[27] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 4, 6.
[28] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1360, i.
[29] Aristotle: *Politics,* 1285, a, 33.
[30] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, 3.
[31] Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Wasps,* 1234.
[32] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1234, i, B.

turn the whole lot of them out of Lesbos; and thus, for the second time, Sappho was ordered to pack up and go.

The punishment must have come as a crushing blow to her, for she loved her native land, and, being still no more than twenty-one years of age, had probably never before left its shores. Many of her friends seem to have turned from her in her trouble, and it may have been now that she wrote the words which have been preserved in one of the fragments of her verse: [33]

"Those that I have done good to do me the greatest injury."

Perhaps, too, it was to them that she proudly wrote the lines:

"Yet I have received true happiness from the golden Muses, and when I die I shall not be forgotten . . ."

—lines quoted by Aristides [34] with the comment that they were addressed by her to certain women who deemed themselves more fortunate than she. It is probable, I should explain, that already at twenty-one she had established herself as a poetess, since she was considered important enough to be exiled.

Another fragment:

"As for him who accuses me, may terrors and worries grip hold of him. . . ." [35]

may have reference to Pittakos.

[33] *Etymologicum Magnum*, 449, 36.
[34] Aristides, ii, 508.
[35] *Etymologicum Magnum*, 335, 38.

"Yet I am not of a resentful spirit, and my heart is like that of a child,"

she wrote;[36] and perhaps it was at this time that she said:

"When anger rises in the breast, restrain the idly-yelping tongue."[37]

There is nothing to tell us whether or not her brothers, who were younger than herself, accompanied her into exile, or whether Alkaios was one of the little company which so sadly set sail from Mitylene. He, Alkaios, is known at some time to have crossed the sea to Egypt,[38] where many Lesbian traders were engaged in business; but this may have been at a later time. One of his elder brothers, Antimenidas, went off to Babylon, and enlisted in the service of Nebuchadnezzar;[39] and other of the exiles no doubt made their way to the Æolian cities on the mainland of Asia Minor, to Lydia, to Egypt, and to the chief centers in Greece itself or the Ægean islands.

Sappho, however, either by choice or by command of Pittakos, sailed across the sea to Sicily, where there were many Greek colonies; and the fact that Cicero mentions[40] a statue of her which was afterwards erected at Syracuse suggests that that famous Greek city was her destination. On the Parian Marble we read that it was "during the archonship of the earlier Kritias at Athens and the rule of the Gamori at Syracuse that Sappho went from Mitylene to Sicily when banished for the second time"; but the exact date is obliterated. The year of the archonship of Kritias is not known and the

[36] Idem, 2, 43.
[37] Plutarch: *On Restraining Anger*, 7.
[38] Strabo, i, 37.
[39] Strabo, xiii, 617; Hephæstion, 63.
[40] Cicero: *In Verrem Actio*, ii, 4, 57.

rule of the Gamori covered many years; but the date must be between 605 and 591 B. C., as has already been said; and the sequence of events as I have here pieced it together makes it clear that Sappho's banishment is to be placed not earlier than 591 B. C.

So far as we can tell, she accepted her punishment without any definite protest; but Alkaios was not long in writing to Pittakos asking to be allowed to return to Mitylene. He received, however, the cold reply, "Opportunity does not yet permit me to call you home," [41] which drew from him an angry poem wherein he declared that the Tyrant's prime was past, and hinted that he ought to hand his authority over to his son, the child of an earlier marriage, who was already grown up and was a young man of promise. Tyrrhæos was the name of this youth, according to Diogenes Laertius, who says that, perhaps at about this time, while sitting in a barber's shop at Kyme, one of the Æolian cities on the coast of Asia Minor, he was killed by a certain brazier, who threw an ax at him. This tragic loss of his son and heir must have been deeply felt by Pittakos, who was now some fifty-five years of age; and thus for the time being we leave him—an unhappy, untidy, rough-spoken man, dragging through his daily duties, fat, ungainly, and the butt of many jokes; nagged at [42] by the painted old harlot whom he had married, worried by constant unrest in the city, uneasy about the exiles whose remaining relatives in Mitylene must have been bitterly hostile to him; increasingly careless of his personal appearance, but painstakingly anxious to serve his country with a steady head and a clean heart.

[41] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1788, 15, ii, 9.
[42] Diogenes Laertius, 80.

Chapter Seven

SAPPHO'S EXILE IN SICILY

THERE is nothing to tell us why Sicily was chosen as the place of Sappho's exile; but the coastline of the island was at that time dotted with Greek settlements, famous for their cultured, comfortable and luxurious life, and although these Greek colonists were not Æolians, and would be likely to find Sappho's dialect a little strange to their ears, she may have felt that she would there be amongst kindred spirits, especially since the government of the colonies was aristocratic, Syracuse itself being ruled by an oligarchy of wealthy and well-born landowners, the above-mentioned Gamori. She must have realized, however, that she would not find there quite the same freedom of her sex as that to which she was accustomed in Lesbos; and she must have had to prepare herself to endure a masculine patronage certain to be very irksome to her after the more intelligent camaraderie between men and women prevalent in her native land. But that could not be helped.

It may be conjectured that she made the journey in two stages, for it was customary to tranship at the isthmus of Corinth in traveling east and west, so as to avoid the long circumnavigation of southern Greece. The first stage would be the passage from Lesbos through the Ægean islands—touching at Chios, Andros, and Keos—to the eastern port of Corinth; and the second from the city's western port, northwards along the Greek coast to Corfu, and thence across the eighty miles of open sea to the heel of Italy, and so down to the toe and on to Sicily.

Perhaps she had no plans, and for the time being wished only to go as far as Corinth; for in that city lived the poet Arion, who, it will be recalled, was a Lesbian by birth but now was employed by Periander, Corinth's aged Tyrant, the arbiter, five years earlier in the settlement of the quarrel between Lesbos and Athens. There is nothing, unfortunately, to indicate that Arion was ever a friend of hers, but as he was her countryman and fellow-worker in the field of lyric poetry it is likely that they were acquainted.

It was perhaps at Corinth that she was advised to go to Syracuse; for that famous Sicilian port—the Syrakousai of the Greeks—was a Corinthian colony, founded nearly a century and a half before this date, and its recommendation to Sappho as a pleasant place to stay in may well have been the outcome of her short sojourn in its mother-city. I find it tempting, however, to pretend that her desired destination was Sybaris, the wealthiest city, and the most notorious for its elegance and self-indulgence, in all the Greek world. The Sybarites have given their name to the devotees of the luxurious life; and Sappho, who has declared in one of her poems that that kind of existence was essential to her,[1] may well have been drawn thither as by an alluring dream. Sybaris was an Achæan Greek colony, situated on the Gulf of Tarentum in southern Italy, just off the main route from Greece to Sicily; and it is at any rate unlikely that she would have passed it unvisited.

The Sybarites [2] had enriched their city by acting as agents in the anciently established trade of Etruria in Italy with the Ægean islands and Asia Minor, particularly with the city of Miletus; and it is not improbable that Sappho had made her journey in the company of merchants engaged in this lucrative business. Sybaris had by this means become so wealthy

[1] Athenæus, xv, 35; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1787, i.
[2] For the following details see Athenæus, xii, 15 ff.

that the very children, it is said, wore dresses of expensive purple and used to plait strands of gold into their hair. The citizens exempted the purveyors of any sort of luxuries from all taxation, and were so eager to add new refinements and charming extravagances to their daily life that they gave every possible encouragement to those who could serve them in this respect. They searched the world for delicacies for their tables, and any cook who invented a new dish was not only rewarded but was allowed to patent his recipe for one year, so that during that time he might make what money he could out of it without competition.

Their city was situated in a somnolent hollow amongst the hills upon the always lazy shores of this southern sea, and the air was so enervating that nobody except the peasants and the slaves did any work; and sleep was valued so highly that the citizens made a law prohibiting noise, not even allowing a crowing rooster to be kept within the limits of the town. Athenæus, quoting from Timæus, the Sicilian historian of the fourth and third centuries B. C., gives a story which tells how a certain Sybarite, who had been watching a farmer digging, declared that he himself felt as if all his bones had been broken by the sight, whereupon another Sybarite to whom he made this remark stopped his ears, saying, "Now you have given *me* a pain in my back."

In hot weather anybody of means who lived in a villa outside the town used to have the whole length of the open road to it shaded by awnings; and it was the custom to set up summer camps in and about the caves amongst the hills, and to live there in the extremest luxury. In winter-time hours were spent in hot vapor baths—Turkish baths, as we should now call them—and nobody went out after nightfall for fear of feeling chilly. At that season the citizens wore beautiful cloaks of Milesian wool, and even the soldiers muffled themselves up, and draped the most elegant saffron-colored

mantles over their armor. Comical little dwarfs were employed in the houses to amuse the languid households—a custom copied from Egypt and the Orient; and everybody kept a small Maltese lap-dog. "The Sybarites delight only in puppy-dogs and in men who are not men," wrote Athenodorus, the Stoic philosopher; and, indeed, their effeminacy was as proverbial as their elegance.

The people of Sicily, and particularly of Syracuse, where Sappho seems—on the evidence already cited—to have taken up her residence, were also celebrated for their luxury.[3] Their Sybarite banquets were famous, and, in fact, with the masterpieces of the culinary art spread before them, they used to eat themselves almost unconscious at least twice a day, whilst their drinking was as unrestrained as their choice of wines was select, and their parties were notorious for the brilliance of the entertainment and the indecency of the songs and jokes—so curiously close is the connection between delicacy and indelicacy, fastidiousness and grossness. The famous and highly-trained courtesans of Corinth were in great demand in Syracuse, and a man was regarded as eccentric who ever slept alone. Temperance and virtue, says Plato, were qualities never so much as thought of.[4]

All this kind of thing, when casually imagined and not habitually experienced, often has its will-o'-the-wisp attraction for the artist; and Sappho may well have come to Syracuse with some hopes of amusement, in spite of the fact that the movements of women were somewhat fettered—except, of course, in the case of those who were willing to dispense with the physical protection of respectability and take their slender chance of decent treatment by men without the aid of the armor of presumed virtue. Phylarchos,[5] the

[3] Athenæus, xii, 34.
[4] Idem.
[5] Athenæus, xii, 20.

historian who lived in the third century B. C., says that women in Syracuse were not permitted to wear golden ornaments, nor dresses embroidered with flowers, unless they were registered prostitutes, and that respectable ladies were not allowed to go out alone at night "unless they were going to commit adultery"; and these conditions may have already obtained in Sappho's day, since Periander, we know, was then restricting women's freedom in the mother-city of Corinth, and Solon was doing the same at Athens.

Sappho's hopes of happiness must therefore have been somewhat clouded; and it may well have been at this time that she decided to obtain the protection of a husband. Suidas states that she married "a very rich man named Kerkolas who operated [in commerce?] from Andros," one of the Ægean islands, off the southern coast of Euboea, about half-way between Lesbos and Corinth; and it is not unlikely that she had met him during her journey, although the fact that the date of her marriage is unknown leaves us in the region of speculation in this regard.

It is possible that there is a reference to this Kerkolas in the fragment of her verse reading:

"To what, dear bridegroom, may I rightly liken thee?—
To a slender sapling do I most rightly liken thee." [6]

But as Sappho had a habit of writing marriage-poems in celebration of her friends' weddings, the lines may perhaps refer to somebody else. At any rate she seems to have been happy with her husband, for in later life, when she was a widow getting on in years, she declared that if she had been younger she would not have hesitated to venture a second time into matrimony,[7] and elsewhere, as we shall read, she

[6] Hephæstion, 44.
[7] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1231, 10.

recalled her wedding night as an occasion of great happiness which passed all too soon.

Yet there is an indication in two of her fragments that she would have preferred to remain single.

"Can it be that I still desire my maidenhood?"

she asks herself in one of these [8]—and, incidentally, it is a comment on life's irony that this uneasy heart's question is preserved to us only because a grammarian found in it an example of the use of a certain grammatical form. And again

"I shall remain eternally-maiden,"

she says,[9] as though hinting that the unity of marriage had left her essential singleness wholly unaffected—a mental attitude which, of course, is quite frequently to be found at the source of a woman's tears and of her husband's bafflement.

Marriage, however, gave her, no doubt, more freedom to make the most of the kind of life she was now obliged to live; and her new wealth must have come to her when most it was needed, and must have enabled her at any rate to enjoy unmolested those beauties and comforts that charming Sicily could offer a woman.

Sicily is an island more or less triangular in shape, its northern and southwestern sides being each about a hundred and seventy miles long, and its eastern side a hundred and twenty. The northeastern corner of the triangle is separated from the toe of Italy by but two miles of water; the northwestern reaches to a point not more than eighty miles from the nearest cape of the coast of North Africa; and the southern

[8] Apollonius: *Conjunctions*, 223, 25.
[9] J. A. Cramer: *Anecdota Græca*, i, 71, 19.

corner projects out into the Mediterranean with Africa on the one side and southern Greece three hundred miles away on the other, while Malta—where the lap-dogs of the Sybarites came from—rises out of the sea about fifty miles to the south.

Syracuse was the southernmost of the four chief Greek settlements on the east coast of the island—the coast facing Greece: as the crow flies it was some six hundred miles from Mitylene; but the journey as Sappho had probably made it was more like a thousand miles, and it must have seemed to her that she had come to the ends of the earth. The nearest important neighbor of Syracuse to the north was Megara Hybla, founded at much the same time by settlers from Megara near Athens; and farther along stood Katane (Catana), and beyond it Naxos, the latter being the oldest Greek city in the island, and the former an early offshoot from it.

On the southwest coast, facing towards Carthaginian Africa, the largest city was Gela, founded a century before this time by Rhodians and Cretans. On the near side of it stood Kamarina, a recent offshoot from Syracuse; and beyond it was Selinos, a city then only thirty-five years old, a daughter-city of Megara Hybla. The northern side of Sicily was more mountainous and wild, but there was one important Greek settlement on this coast also—Himera, founded somewhat over half a century back by Chalcidians from their colony of Messina on the opposite shore.

Like Mitylene, Syracuse was built upon a spit of land separated from the mainland by a narrow channel which had been heavily bridged over, thus converting the island—which was called Ortygia—into a virtual peninsula. At the north end of this channel was a small port, and at the south end was an extensive bay which formed the largest and safest harbor in Sicily. The acropolis or citadel stood on the rocks of Ortygia, reflected in the translucent sea, and surrounded by the

oldest parts of the town; and its ice-cold drinking water was obtained from the famous Arethusa spring, near the beach facing the bay, so called because the chilly-hearted nymph of that name, according to the legend, was here changed into a fountain by Artemis to save her from the undesired ardor of the river-god Alpheus.

The agora, or forum, was situated on the land-side of the bridge over the channel; and though some of the temples and public buildings stood in this neighborhood, the chief temple of the city, that of Apollo, had recently been erected on the island. Remains of it are still to be seen, and it appears to have had an imposing frontage of some seventy-four feet, and a row of no less than nineteen columns on either side —a fact which suggests that these colonial Corinthians had attempted to rival the efforts of Periander, who, it will be remembered, had just erected a splendid temple to Apollo in the mother-city.

Low hills screened Syracuse on the west, but from the high ground, where many of the private houses were placed, there was a magnificent view of mysterious Mount Etna, fifty miles to the north, rising eleven thousand feet above the sea, its upper levels covered with snow for the greater part of each year; while to the west range behind range of mountains carried the eye in great strides of vision across the island. The country was very fertile, and such exceptional crops of wheat were produced that Sicily came to be regarded as the favorite abode of the goddess Demeter, whom the Romans called Ceres. In the north, in the neighborhood of Etna, the vineyards and olive-groves were of the best, and the harvest of figs, apples, mulberries, pomegranates, almonds, and so forth, varied each year only in the degree of its superabundance.

The island was well-timbered, except around Katane, which was rather treeless; and on the slopes of Etna, above the vine-

yards, there were forests of birch and pine, red beech and chestnut, only the highest levels being barren. The country was rich in the flowers Sappho so dearly loved, and its honey was famous. One can imagine her walking in the olive-groves of Syracuse, thinking of their like in Lesbos, and, through the silvery foliage, looking down at the sea as blue as her own Ægean; and, since her husband was so wealthy, her Sicilian villa may well have been even more charming than that in which she had been brought up, richer in its appointments, more luxuriantly bowered in flowers and flowering trees, and set about with more dream-like gardens and orchards where, as she somewhere says of such a place,[10]

> "by the cool waterside the breeze rustles through the apple-branches, and from the shaken leaves sleep floats down."

It was probably here in Sicily that her only child was born, a girl whom she named Kleïs after her mother,[11] and in whom she found the greatest delight. There are two references to the child in the surviving fragments of her poems. In one she writes:

> "I have a little daughter, like a golden flower, my darling Kleïs, for whom I would not take all Lydia nor lovely Lesbos. . . ." [12]

and in the other [13] the girl is mentioned as being old enough to attend to household duties at a time when Sappho was young enough to be still at the height of her physical charms

[10] Hermogenes, in Walz's *Rhetorica Græca,* iii, 315.

[11] Suidas: Lexicon; Ovid: *Epistolæ,* xv; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, i, i.

[12] Hephæstion, 98.

[13] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 1.

—a point which makes me think that the birth of Kleïs is hardly to be placed later than this period of exile. It is not easy to picture the dainty and elusive Sappho in the guise of a mother—a little doll playing with a doll; and yet such a picture is one of charm, and has about it a normality which, one feels, has an astringent effect in the study of her fluid character.

Of the circle of her friends and relatives at this stage of her life's light-footed journey nothing is known. By now her mother may have been dead, for the one seeming reference to her after Sappho was grown up—

> "Sweet mother, I cannot weave this mesh of mine, for with love of a slender youth I am overwhelmed by Aphrodite"— [14]

looks like a piece of her early work, or may belong to the days when she was first attracted to her husband, if, indeed, the words are supposed to be spoken by her at all. He, Kerkolas, has also passed from the picture with the one brief reference of Suidas which brought him into it; and all we know in this regard is that Sappho was early a widow. Nobody knows where Alkaios was at this time; and no names of other exiles who may have been with her are mentioned.

The poet Arion, however, makes a momentary appearance at the edge of the story, and may perhaps be brought into it. Herodotus relates [15] that Arion "one day conceived a longing to visit Italy and Sicily, and having done so, and having made a large sum of money there, determined, after a considerable time, to return to Corinth." The date of his visit is not known, but it may have been during the period when his Lesbian countrywoman, Sappho, was staying there, in

[14] Hephæstion, 65.
[15] Herodotus, i, 23.

which case she doubtless offered him the hospitality of her house.

His return journey to Corinth, by the way, was marked by an extraordinary incident which Herodotus proceeds to relate. At Tarentum in southern Italy, not far from Sybaris, he boarded a Corinthian vessel which was bound for Corinth by the southern route around Greece; but when they were passing Tænarum,[16] the southernmost promontory of Sparta, the sailors decided to do away with him so as to obtain possession of his money. They therefore gave him his choice: either he could kill himself, in which case they promised to land his corpse and give it decent burial, or else he could walk the plank and commit his body to the care of the deep.

Apparently to gain time and so come nearer to the shore, or to profit by the approaching nightfall, Arion told them that he would sing them a last song; and, having put on his minstrel's robe, he fetched his harp and sang them the whole of his longest poem, the Orthian. Then suddenly he dived into the sea. His wooden harp with its hollow sounding-box perhaps served as a buoy, and the darkness may have concealed him from the murderous sailors: at any rate, he safely reached the shore, and proceeded overland to Corinth, where he told Periander a poetic tale of his having been saved by a dolphin which had taken him on its back. In due course his would-be murderers arrived in Corinth, only to be confronted by their victim and forthwith punished; but in commemoration of the event a statue of Arion riding upon a dolphin was erected on the promontory of Tænarum, where it was seen by Ælian seven hundred years later.

One other person whom Sappho may have met in Sicily was the poet Stesichoros, of whom I have already spoken in

[16] Eusebius (*Chronicle*) says "off Tænarum," which is better than "the open sea" of Herodotus.

Chapter Three, and who was born at Himera, on the wild, northern coast of Sicily, but was educated and lived for a time at Katane, forty miles north of Syracuse. He appears to have been twenty or more years older than Sappho,[17] but Suidas reckoned him as her contemporary and the contemporary of Alkaios and Pittakos, and he was probably a middle-aged man at the height of his fame when he met her, if meet her he did. In the Palatine Anthology he is described as "the copious mouthpiece of an immeasurable muse"; and, as has already been said, his work was of epic character, based on Homer, but written in lyric form.

His poetry, however, was not of the kind which Sappho would have been likely to appreciate, and he had a way of presenting a moral case which must have made her smile. One of his poems, for instance, told the story of a young woman who, having fallen in love, killed herself rather than endanger her chastity, the man of her choice having been anxious to proceed to extremes without first making her his lawful wife; and Athenæus, who mentions the story,[18] says that its moral tone was very high. Sappho, of course, would not have recognized any ethical distinction between sacrificing her maidenhood before marriage and doing so afterwards: both would appear to have been regarded by her as involving a certain undefined loss, but all that would ever have made her feel suicidal under similar circumstances would have been the chosen man's refusal to abet her in the voluntary incurring of this loss. Viewed from a conventional standpoint, she had no morals; but it is abundantly apparent that she set great store upon what may be called the virginity

[17] He died in the 56th Olympiad (556–553 B. C.)—Cicero: *Republic,* 2, 20; and Suidas. According to Lucian (*Longevity,* 26) he was then eighty-five, but Suidas says he was born in the 37th Olympiad (632–629 B. C.), which makes him about eighty, and rather over forty when Sappho was in Sicily.

[18] Athenæus, xiv, 11.

of the heart. She was, in fact, over-fastidious; and the thought of a woman submitting to the mastery of a man—a thought so often instinctively attractive to the feminine mind—was evidently not pleasant to her. As she says, she was *aiparthenos,* "eternally-virgin."

In the surviving fragments of her verses there are numerous admiring references to girls who were still maidens, and one can see how the virginal body and soul appealed to her. She writes of gentle-voiced maidens, sweet-voiced maidens, slender-ankled maidens, maidens of Mitylene, maidens like rosebuds, maidens singing of love, maidens unrivalled, maidens longed for; and in a haunting trifle which perhaps has reference to the eternal singleness of her own heart, she writes:

> "Like the sweet apple that reddens on the end of the bough, the very end of the bough, which the gatherers missed, nay, missed not, but could not reach so far away. . . ." [19]

or, as Rossetti has rendered it:

> "Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough,
> A-top on the topmost twig—which the pluckers forgot, somehow—
> Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it. . . ."

And in another fragment [20] she puts into the mouth of a bride the wistful question:

[19] Scholiast on Hermogenes, in Walz's *Rhetorica Græca,* vii, 883.
[20] Demetrius: *On Style,* 140.

"Maidenhood, maidenhood, whither art thou gone from me?"

to which that lost estate replies:

"Whence never again will I come to thee, never again will I come. . . ."

as though there had departed an elusive quality of which the loss, not readily to be defined, was apprehended by Sappho herself.

Yet Stesichoros, though unconcerned with these niceties of perception, was a man of delicately strung nerves and tender emotion; and it was said of him that there was a nightingale singing when he was born. At one time in his life his eyes gave him considerable trouble, and, believing that he was going blind, he cast about in his mind for the reason of his affliction, and at last decided that he was under the displeasure of the spirit of Helen of Troy, about whom he had made some disparaging remarks in a recent poem. Hastily, therefore, he composed another poem, declaring that what he had said of her was untrue; and having published this *palinode,* or recantation, he was cured.

Nothing is known as to the length of Sappho's exile in Sicily; but it seems clear to me from the course of subsequent events that her wealth, her genius, and some sort of peculiar fascination about her, caused her during this period to attain a position of unrivalled leadership in the literary, artistic, and social circles of Syracuse. The Parian Marble, by giving so carefully the date of her sojourn in Sicily, indicates that that was an important period in her life—the period, perhaps, in which her verses were first recognized as masterpieces; but by the end of her exile she herself was also recognized as a figure of the utmost brilliance. I think that we

must suppose her life here to have been one of increasing social success; and that the perfection of her taste in the use of her wealth, the diamond-like sparkle in all her actions, and the radiance of her genius, had combined to make her in these years a character of widespread fame. Yet it is evident that she was still young when she resumed her life in Lesbos, and therefore it may be supposed that permission for her return was issued by Pittakos after her banishment had lasted not more than about five years at most—that is to say, not later than 586 B. C., when her age was about twenty-six.

Chapter Eight

SPARTA, AND THE DORIAN AND ÆOLIAN TREATMENT OF WOMEN

I HAVE already had reason to mention more than once the famous city of Sparta. The sea-soaked Arion had made his way thither after his attempted murder by the Corinthian sailors; [1] Spartan judges had decided the dispute of Athens and Megara over the possession of Salamis; [2] and at Sparta the poets Tyrtæos, Terpander, Thales, Alkman, Polymnastos, and others, had pursued their calling.[3] The city was, in fact, one of the great centers of music and poetry at this time; and for this and other reasons some account of Spartan life is here called for.

Spartē or Lakedaimon (Lacedæmon), as the Greeks called it, was the chief city of the southern part of Greece, and the capital of Laconica, the country which formed the southeastern corner of the Peloponnesus. North of it was Argolis and happy Arcadia, and west of it mountainous Messenia. As the crow flies, Corinth was about sixty miles to the northeast; Athens nearly a hundred; and Mitylene some two hundred and fifty. It stood about twenty miles north of the seacoast, and some twenty-seven from its port, Gythion, the river Eurotas flowing past the eastern side of the city in its journey down from the borders of Arcadia to the sea. Two or three miles to the east were the windy hills which rose to the famous mountain of Menelaium, and to the west, not

[1] Chapter Seven.
[2] Chapter Five.
[3] Chapter Three.

four miles away, was the wild and rugged range of Taygetus whose bare heights in winter were capped with snow; but the valley thus enclosed was a quiet, luxuriant region where the air was soft and even enervating, and where the fertile earth, watered by the Eurotas and its little tributaries, was covered with olive-groves and orchards, grassy meadows and cornfields, and was rich in wild flowers.

The city was circular in form, and was divided into several districts which had once been separate villages; but it had neither walls nor acropolis, although the highest ground, whereon stood the temple of Athena, was sometimes called the acropolis in later times. The center of its life was the agora, beside which stood the senate-house and the chief public buildings; and from this center ran the two principal streets, the Aphetæ and the Skias. But Sparta was never a city of any magnificence; and its ruins are not imposing, nor do they give us much idea of the appearance of the place in ancient times. It was the Spartan code and rule of life, not the buildings of the metropolis, which evoked the admiring interest of antiquity.

This code was traditionally said to have been instituted by the great legislator Lycurgus, who is usually supposed to have lived in the ninth century B. C., but whose actual date is no more certain now than it was in the time of Plutarch, who writes [4] that "the accounts of him which historians have left us . . . cannot by any means be brought to an agreement as to the age in which he lived." At any rate, it is certain that he belonged to that Dorian race of conquerors which had swarmed down from northern Greece at the dawn of history and had established itself as a ruling caste in Sparta; and there is some reason to suppose that he was a member of one or other of the two great families which provided the city

[4] Plutarch: *Lycurgus.*

with its kings. There were always two kings in Sparta, representative of these two houses, who reigned side by side, and neither of whom could act without the consent of the other; but it is not known whether the strict constitutional laws which limited their authority were initiated or not by Lycurgus.

The most important power in the state was the council of the five Ephors, the elderly members of which were elected annually, and, for the one year of their office, lived together, taking an oath once a month to maintain the two kings on their joint throne on the condition that the twin monarchs should also take a monthly oath to obey the laws, which was another way of saying that they were to obey the Ephors. The kings were expected to lead the Spartan armies in war, but two old Ephors always accompanied them in order to observe and to report on their conduct; and in war or peace the Ephors always controlled the two sovereigns and had to decide upon all matters where there was a difference of opinion between them.

There was also a Senate consisting of twenty-eight members, all over sixty years of age, and all belonging to certain privileged families: they held office for the duration of their lives, and thus there must always have been in this body a high percentage of senile old men who could do little else but nod or shake their venerable heads. All enfranchised Spartans over thirty years of age had the right of attending the *Apella,* or Assembly, and of voting in it; but as the higher authorities could set aside its decisions, its meetings did no more than supply a temporary vent to public opinion.

These men who were allowed to vote belonged to the Spartiates, the small, ruling class; but there was also a secondary and larger class known as the Perioikoi, who had no such political rights; while the bulk of the people, the Heilotes

or Helots, were merely serfs who tilled the land, and were hardly to be distinguished from slaves. Every year, on entering office, the new Ephors solemnly declared war on these helots, this being a precautionary measure the purpose of which was to emphasize the fact that the Spartiates were of the conquering caste, and that these serfs existed only on sufferance and were technically as devoid of rights as prisoners of war. In other countries the laboring classes have often been treated like slaves; but Sparta, I fancy, is unique in history in terming them actual enemies.

Lycurgus had evidently realized that the small ruling class would have no chance of maintaining itself in power, or, indeed, of protecting itself from annihilation at the hands of a rebellious helotry, except by the practice of some kind of code of strict discipline which would prevent its falling into slack or luxury-loving ways in the lazy air of this beautiful valley. He saw, no doubt, that the only hope of preserving the existence of this upper class at all lay in its whole-hearted adoption of a system of military training and an ideal of service to the state which should override all personal or family considerations and should convert the entire body of the Spartiates into a kind of machine, the sole purpose of which should be the maintenance of its own iron authority. The code which he forced upon them, however, was so severe that existence at such a price must sometimes hardly have seemed worth while; and, indeed, a story is told of a certain man of Sybaris who, having visited Sparta, declared that the Spartans' readiness to face death in battle was not to be wondered at, since it would be preferable to die a thousand deaths than to endure such a life as theirs.[5] The marvel is that the system was maintained for so many centuries; but if this fact says much for human endurance it also demonstrates the tremendous resistance to change in the minds of

[5] Athenæus, xii, 15; iv, 15.

any governing body of old men.[6] Lycurgus, however, took the precaution of refusing to allow his Spartans to go abroad except on the most urgent business, and he did what he could to prevent foreigners from coming to Sparta; and thus he put a considerable check on criticism.

When a baby was born, whether boy or girl, the law enjoined that it was to be taken before a committee appointed by the Ephors; and if it was a good and healthy specimen it was allowed to live, but if it was puny or unhealthy it was carried off to a certain chasm at the foot of the Taygetus mountains and there left to die or to be devoured. At the age of seven a boy was taken from his home, and was sent to live with other boys in one of the institutions established by the state for the training of the young in courage, endurance, and discipline. Here he was placed in a group under the captaincy of some one particularly promising boy, whose orders he had to obey, the frequent punishments inflicted by him having to be endured without complaint. Reading, writing, and music were taught; but apart from this the training was almost entirely physical.

The boys were constantly under the eye of elderly inspectors, who would often encourage them to fight with one another, so that an opinion might be formed thus early in life as to their military potentialities. The minimum of clothing was allowed them, and in all their games and exercises they were made to strip quite naked; while at nights they had to sleep on wooden boards covered with dry reeds which they were made to gather with their bare hands without the use of a knife. Affectionate friendships between elder and younger boys were encouraged, so that every younger boy should have somebody to regard as his hero, and every elder boy

[6] Most of the following details will be found in Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*. See also Xenophon: *Respublica Lacedæmoniorum;* and Aristotle: *Politics*.

somebody weaker than himself to train in adventure and bravery. Thus, as Plutarch says, "there was not any one of the more promising boys who had not a 'lover' to bear him company"—a statement, however, which does not necessarily imply any impropriety, though the point is hard to determine, owing to the absence of direct evidence, the Greeks not regarding even the extremes of emotional attachment between two males as anything remarkable, unusual, or offensive.

At the age of twelve the boys' clothing was still further cut down; they were forbidden to wear shoes; and they were not allowed to have baths except on certain days in the year. Their food supplies were now diminished in order that they might be encouraged to forage for themselves; and raids by bands of boys upon people's orchards or vegetable-gardens were winked at by the authorities, and even thefts of meat from the shops were regarded as healthy indications of youthful enterprise. All kinds of tests of endurance and the silent bearing of pain were imposed; and when they were more or less fully grown the youths had to submit to a terrible flogging at the altar of the goddess Artemis—a barbarous custom which had its origin in a half-forgotten religious rite,[7] the practice of scourging the victim of a human sacrifice being very widespread in primitive times.[8] These boys were flogged until their blood streamed over the altar, while their parents stood amongst the crowd of spectators, complacently watching the ordeal. "I myself," writes Plutarch, "have seen several boys flogged to death at the altar of Artemis"; and, in fact, death during the *diamastigosis,* as the disgusting business was called, was considered as honorable as death in battle.

[7] Pausanias, iii, 16, 6.

[8] Lycurgus is said to have *substituted* the scourging for the sacrifice; but it is probably more correct to say that he *retained* the scourging and abolished the actual killing.

At the age of twenty the Spartan youth was considered ready for military service, and was sent to live in barracks, where he became a member of a mess which generally consisted of about fifteen young men. A piece of land was assigned to each individual; and he was expected to contribute to the common table whatever produce it afforded him. The fare was simple, the basis of every meal being the celebrated black-broth of Sparta, which was so unpalatable that it was said in jest to require no less a seasoning than that of sheer hunger and fatigue. Confectionery and sweetmeats were considered injurious to health; [9] and even banquets on great occasions consisted chiefly of bread, meat, beans and other vegetables, salads, and dried figs.[10]

No Spartan was allowed to engage in any trade, and money-making was forbidden. All gold and silver was called in, and heavy bars of iron were used as a medium of exchange.[11] The land was worked by the helots, and its produce shared; and the houses were all of more or less one pattern, devoid of ornamentation, nor were any lights allowed to be used at night. Music was the single art which was encouraged, and this only for military or patriotic purposes. There was no literature, and even speech at any length was discouraged, the short, pithy remarks of the Spartans being so notorious that we still speak of that style of address as "laconic," that is to say, pertaining to Laconica, the Spartan country. Mirth, however, was compulsory, and Lycurgus himself dedicated a little statue to Laughter. Modern excavations have shown that in the time of Sappho, and earlier, Spartan artists were turning out a certain number of statuettes; but this art presently died out.

At the age of thirty a man was allowed to marry; but love

[9] Athenæus, xiv, 74.
[10] Athenæus, iv, 15 ff.
[11] Chapter Eighteen.

and romance were discouraged, and, in fact, Athenæus states [12] that the choice of a bride was often left to chance, several men at night-time being pushed into an unlit room with an equal number of girls, and left to grope in the darkness for a mate. This marriage-lottery, however, was no great hazard, for Spartan women were largely of one pattern—robust, healthy-looking, athletic creatures, whose sole purpose in life was the production of healthy children for the future service of the state. Girls were trained like the men in athletics and gymnastics; they wrestled, threw the discus and the javelin, and performed various feats of strength; they were often present at the men's sports and sometimes even ran races with them; and in all such exercises they were expected to go naked or else to wear but a short *chiton,* or tunic. Modesty was deprecated as tending, I suppose, towards love's romance, the partial concealment of the feminine form being in all ages largely erotic; and, in fact, Euripides [13] tells us that no Spartan girl had a chance of being modest, even if she wished to be. "In order to do away with all acquired womanishness," writes Plutarch, "Lycurgus directed, also, that the young women should walk naked in the public processions, as did the young men, and should dance, too, in that condition, and sing their songs, whilst the men stood around watching and listening to them. . . . Nor was there anything shameful in this nakedness of the women, for all wantonness was excluded."

Girls were not married until they were about twenty years of age. On a bride's wedding-day her hair was cut short and she was dressed in a man's clothes; after which she was taken into a dark room, and placed upon a hard straw-mattress. The bridegroom then groped his way in, wearing his working-clothes, having come straight from the military mess, and to

[12] Athenæus, xiii, 2.
[13] Euripides: *Andromache,* 595.

the mess he returned an hour or two later. Subsequently they met in secret and as best they could manage, having as yet no house of their own; and it is said that often the wife bore children to her husband without ever having seen him by the light of day, though it is not easy to reconcile this assertion with the statement that men and unmarried girls met together with such entire freedom on the athletic field. Later the couple was assigned a house, and of this the wife was absolute mistress; and whereas in many parts of Greece the wife addressed her husband as "lord" or "master," in Sparta it was the man who called his wife *despoina,* "lady" or "mistress." Women, rather than men, were considered as the natural holders of property, the men being too busy with military affairs; and certainly in the fourth century B. C., if not in Sappho's time, nearly half the lands of Laconica were actually owned by women. Married women were not supposed to frequent the playing fields as they had done when they were girls; but their general movements were not much restricted, and, on the whole, they were a good deal freer than the men, although the need of conforming to the Spartan code enslaved their minds completely enough.

As has been said, a Spartan woman's main object in life was the production of healthy children, and for this purpose she was permitted on occasion to select a man, other than her husband, to be the father of her child. Sometimes two women, who were not satisfied with their offspring, would exchange husbands; sometimes an elderly or ailing husband would, with his wife's consent, hand her over temporarily to a fitter man; and sometimes a woman would keep two or three men for the purpose of her experiments in eugenics. If she did not like the man to whom she was married, moreover, she was entitled to leave him and to take her belongings with her, a divorce being then arranged. Plutarch states that Lycurgus was definitely of the opinion that just as dogs and

horses were bred with care from selected couples, so human offspring should be produced by scientific breeding, and should be reared and trained, when infancy was past, by professionals, the idea of family life and the home being foolishly sentimental. At the same time, Plutarch adds, married women were permitted to make professions to young girls of that kind of love in which both parties are of the same sex.

In spite of all this the ladies of Sparta were generally considered to be moral and chaste; and the statements of Aristotle and Plato [14] that these licenses legalized the most unrestrained immorality were not subscribed to by foreign critics, who usually gaped at Spartan customs in respectful astonishment, though they sometimes admitted that Spartan husbands were inclined to be henpecked. Personally, I am of opinion that the study of Lycurgus is one which belongs to the province of the pathologist, for his code, in its sexual aspect, has too close an affinity with certain well-known perversions of the human mind to be regarded as the creation of pure idealism. The youths with their male "lovers," the girls forced to walk naked in the public processions, the brides dressed as men, the wives with their right to make trial of the qualities of different men, the parents obliged to witness the flogging of their sons, and so forth, are matters which point to something very like sexual lunacy in the author of the system; and one reads with sympathy of the man—a certain Alkander by name—who went after Lycurgus with a stick and nearly beat the life out of him. It is true that this personage was chiefly incensed at the ordinance which obliged him to eat at a communal table and to make a show of enjoying the disgusting black-broth there set before him; but one may well imagine him to have been in revolt against the whole code.

Spartan women, I may add, were taught to regard their sons as the absolute property of the state, and we read of a mother

[14] Aristotle: *Politics*, ii, 9; Plato: *Laws*, 780.

saying to her soldier-son as he set out for the wars, "Come back either *with* your shield, or *upon* it"; and these mothers were wont to declare that they were more fortunate when their boys died in battle than when they returned unhurt. A certain Spartan woman was much commended for having killed her son because he had saved his life in battle by running away; and another is stated to have shouted the equivalent of "Hurrah!" when she heard that her eight sons had all been killed. It was not until the age of sixty that men were allowed to retire from their military and communal duties, and take up their residence at home; and if by this time they were widowers they were expected to marry again. Men without wives were regarded as miscreants; and it is said that they were liable to be set upon and roughly handled by groups of angry women, nor was it any joking matter to be mauled by the powerful ladies of Sparta.

The position of women in Sparta is of particular interest to us in connection with Sappho; for in this regard the Æolian civilization of Lesbos had more in common with Dorian institutions than with those of the other Greek races. The code of Lycurgus in its relation to women presupposes a considerable freedom of the sex amongst his people; and there is plenty of evidence to show, in fact, that in all the Doric states the standing of women was very much higher than it was in, say, Ionia or Attica. Some of these Doric states were situated on the coast of Asia Minor and the neighboring islands, and must have been in constant touch with Lesbos. On the mainland of Caria, a hundred and fifty miles south of Mitylene, stood the important Dorian city of Halicarnassus, and on the promontory south of it was Knidos (Cnidus). Between these two cities lay the island of Kos, where there was a mixed population of Dorians and Æolians; and to the south again was the island of Rhodes, with its three Dorian cities, Lindos, Ialysos, and Kameiros. But between this Dorian

region and the Æolian lands lay the territory of the Ionians, where women were regarded in the Oriental manner as very inferior to men. Thus Lesbos was as likely to be influenced by the one as by the other; and it would therefore seem that there was a basic similarity between the Æolians and the Dorians in their treatment of women, and that the code of Lycurgus simply pushed to extremes an attitude with which the Lesbians were familiar.

There is not much direct evidence, other than that supplied by the life of Sappho herself, as to the position of women in Lesbos; but the general inference, as I have already said, is that they were almost as free as the western women of to-day. When Lesbos was visited by Tournefort [15] about two hundred years ago, the Lesbian women were noted for their lack of feminine bashfulness, and the fact that, in spite of the island being under the rule of Islam, they then often went naked to the waist, and that their ordinary dresses did not cover the breast, indicates that there was still a very strong tradition of freedom from that kind of male dictation which demands the veiling and the seclusion of their womenkind. A century later the traveler Skene [16] describes the Lesbian women as being extremely masculine, as inheriting all landed property, and as being the managers of all family affairs. In fact, he says that they used to go out to work, or to hunt on horseback, while the men sat at home to spin. I do not wish to suggest that the men of Lesbos in Sappho's time were henpecked by their wives, as the Spartan men were said to be; but it seems that we are to picture Lesbian women as then being particularly free—as free in some respects as the Spartans, and, indeed, freer, since they were not called upon to conform to a soulless system which developed the body and stultified the brains.

[15] Tournefort: *Voyage into the Levant.*
[16] Skene: *Wayfaring Sketches,* 1847.

Chapter Nine

SAPPHO AND HER *HETÆRÆ*

THE return of Sappho and the noble exiles to Mitylene was due, it would seem, to the fact that Pittakos was now so firmly established there as Tyrant, and had so won the affections of the people at large, that no danger of a rising was to be feared. It may be supposed that his aristocratic wife, who in the past had distributed her favors so widely amongst the eligible men of the city, had now been of some use to Pittakos as a go-between in his negotiations with the rebel nobles; and at any rate he himself bore no grudges, and seems to have been very willing to establish friendly relations with them. Such an attitude is indicated by the fact that he now permitted Sappho's youngest brother, Larichos, who was at this time about twenty years of age, to act as cup-bearer at the public banquets in the Town Hall of Mitylene [1]—this being a duty to which much honor was attached, and one which was only assigned to young men of the highest social standing.

Sappho, as has been said, had already established her reputation as a poetess and a personality of astonishing brilliancy of life, and this special consideration for her brother was probably a mark of respect for herself, particularly since she was now a very wealthy woman—unless we are to suppose that her husband's riches had somehow been lost to her, which is not

[1] Athenæus, x, 24. Previous to the exile he would perhaps have been too young, and certainly his family too hostile to Pittakos; so he was probably given this post after the return.

likely in view of her references, as we shall presently read, to her luxuries and her slaves.

Under these favorable conditions she now began—casually, I think, and without plan—to gather about her a number of young girls from her own walk of life, to whom, as a labor of love, she taught the arts in which she excelled—that is to say, verse-making, music, and dancing. As a lyric poetess she had always set her poetry to her own musical accompaniment on the harp; and it evidently gave her pleasure to teach others to do the same. Rhythmic movements in time to the music, and gestures expressing the emotions aroused by the subject of the poem, were customary, but in any case came naturally to her; and it seems that she had in such a marked degree the ability to instruct her young friends in the art of being graceful thus in word and action that mothers were anxious to obtain her interest in their daughters. She was not much more than a girl herself at this time, yet she had come back from her exile with such a reputation for wealth, brains, talents, and elegant graces that the ladies of Mitylene quickly acknowledged her as the supreme figure in their fashionable circle, to know whom was an honor and by whom to be taken up a social and artistic privilege. As Strabo says, she was a miracle of a young woman.[2]

Sappho always speaks of these girls who thronged to her house as her *hetæræ,* a word which sounds strange to the ears because it was later used to denote those trained courtesans who were the usual mistresses of Greek men of means; but at this time it had not this significance, and it may best be translated as "intimate companions" or "bosom-friends," there being, however, a certain tender affection in the term. I do not suppose, thus, that she thought of herself as in any sense the head-mistress of a school or academy, as is usually believed, nor does it seem that she wished to be regarded at

[2] Strabo, xiii, 617.

first as a teacher around whom a group of students, or pupils, or disciples was gathering, for in that case she would hardly have called them her *hetæræ*. It is more probable that her attitude was quite individual, quite undictated by any artistic or educational custom: she simply enjoyed having these girls, younger than herself, around her, making free use of her charming house and gardens, vying with one another to do little things for her, adoring her as their ideal, and incidentally learning from her, as from a friend older and far cleverer than themselves, the refinements of the already famous Lesbian culture, to which she could now add a very thorough knowledge of the elegancies of Sicilian and Sybarite life.

One might have thought that this celebrity of hers was only attained in later years, and, indeed, by middle age it had certainly grown to sublime proportions; but there seems to me to be no doubt that her brilliance was thus early recognized, for she speaks afterwards of this time as being the period when her "own girlhood was still all flowers," [3] and looks back on it as "the splendid heyday of youth." [4] Everybody was talking about her, and soon her fame spread to the neighboring lands. One of the girls, for instance, who was brought to Mitylene to be near her was a certain Anaktoria, who came from Miletus in Asia Minor, according to the Lexicon of Suidas (where, however, the name is miswritten as Anagora); and there is evidence that her association with Sappho dates from this period of the story.[5]

This far-reaching fame presently brought to her a beautiful, fragile girl named Gyrinno [6] or Gyrinna,[7] who is probably to be identified with the poetess Erinna, a contemporary

[3] Terentianus Maurus: *On Metres,* VI, 390 (Keil).
[4] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 13.
[5] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 5.
[6] Hephæstion, 69.
[7] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii).

of Sappho according to Suidas, though Eusebius, apparently confusing her with another, gives her a later date. Her home —if this identification may stand—was in Telos, an island not far from Rhodes, off the southwestern coast of Asia Minor; but with great difficulty she persuaded her mother to allow her to come to Mitylene, where she seems to have stayed in Sappho's house. There she wrote, amongst other verse, an epic poem of three hundred lines which she called "The Distaff." It is now lost except for a few unimportant lines, but it was very highly regarded in antiquity, written though it was in that mixed Æolian and Doric dialect which was spoken in Rhodes; and it may have been to her that Sappho wrote the appreciative lines:

> "I do not believe that any maiden under the sun will ever rival you in your art." [8]

Maximus of Tyre says that what Alcibiades was to Socrates so this frail and lovely girl became to Sappho, which means that Sappho loved her, though to what degree the romantic aberration was carried is concealed amidst the poems which the débris of the past still hides, and may hide for ever; but their relationship, whatever it was, came to a sad end, for when she was only nineteen the delicate lamp of her passionate burning failed and went out. There is a verse about her in the Greek Anthology, which J. A. Symonds has not very successfully translated thus:

> These are Erinna's songs: how sweet, how slight!
> (For she was but a girl of nineteen years)
> Yet stronger far than what most men can write:
> Had death delayed, whose fame had equalled hers?

[8] Chrysippus: *Negatives*, 8, 13.

Her verses, however, must have been largely inspired by her wayward love, for they were later considered to be bad for public morals, and, with Sappho's, were burnt by the Church.[9]

Damophyla, too, who came from Pamphylia on the south coast of Asia Minor, and was herself a poetess, although not a line of hers remains, stayed for some time with the hospitable Sappho at Mitylene, and there wrote love-poems and also certain hymns to the goddess Artemis which were adaptations of her patroness's poems.[10] She seems, like Sappho, to have been moved by the beauty she saw in her own sex: at least, it is said that she later gathered her own *hetæræ* about her, which indicates, perhaps, that her emotional tendencies, concealed or expressed, lay in a similar direction. Four other girls from abroad who joined Sappho's circle are known by name—Gongyla of Kolophon, near Ephesus, and Timas of Phokæa, of whom we shall read in later chapters; Euneika [11] of Salamis, near Athens; and Hero [12] of Gyara, near Andros, whom Sappho, in the single surviving mention of her, calls

"the fleet-footed little maiden."

Her other *hetæræ* who are known by name were apparently natives of Lesbos: Atthis, about whom, as will presently be seen, a good deal is known; Praxinoa; [13] the beautiful Kydro; [14] Telesippa and Megara,[15] who, with Atthis, are particularly named by Suidas as having stirred Sappho's strange, romantic affections, but all other reference to whom

[9] Petrus Alcyonius.
[10] Philostratus: *Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* i, 30.
[11] Suidas.
[12] Aldus: *Cornucopia,* 268B.
[13] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 2.
[14] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv, 15.
[15] Suidas.

has been lost in the destruction of her works; and Mnasidika, called Dika for short, to whom there are two references in the surviving fragments of Sappho's poetry. One of these references is in a single line quoted by Hephæstion [16] as an example of a certain meter:

> "More beautiful of figure is Mnasidika than the delicate Gyrinno . . ."

and the other is a passage of four lines, reading:

> "But you, Dika, plait with your delicate fingers a wreath of sprigs of anise to place upon your lovely hair; for very sure it is that the blessed Graces are inclined to look with favor on anything decked with pretty flowers, and to turn away from all that shall come to them ungarlanded." [17]

The episode of Sappho's tragic love for Atthis, which I am about to attempt to piece together, is one which her biographer must approach with hesitation, fearful of some apprehended poison blended in it with its sweetness and sorrow, doubting the poison, doubting himself for doubting it, aware that here in truth was love in its most overwhelming radiance, yet conscious, too, that this love had nothing in nature to justify its frenzy, nothing by which to make a demand upon the sympathies of ordinarily-minded men and women. Atthis was a young girl; Sappho a woman in the later twenties when the affair began. They were "bound together," says Suidas, "by an affection which was slanderously declared to be shameful"; and it must have been chiefly on account of this slander, if slander it be, that Sappho's poems—so many of them ad-

[16] Hephæstion, 69.
[17] Athenæus, xv, 16.

dressed to Atthis—were burnt. Yet now that some of these verses, which enthralled antiquity, have been brought to light, now that we know that they cannot be read unmoved, who shall say that the destruction of the bulk of them has been of service to the world and has not, rather, robbed it of a thing of beauty? Beauty is not called into being by rule, nor can it always be shaped to fit into the limits of the good or the healthy.

I have had to piece the tale together from stray quotations in the works of classical writers who, as often as not, had referred to them merely to illustrate some grammatical point, some rare use of a word, or some custom, and from the fragments of poetry brought to light by modern excavations; but some sort of sequence can be found in these, and the general lines of the story are clear. When they first met, Atthis was but a young schoolgirl; for Sappho afterwards wrote:

> "I loved you, Atthis, long ago, when my own girlhood was still all flowers, and you seemed to me an awkward little child." [18]

But as the years passed she grew into a beautiful young woman, the most promising of all the *hetæræ,* and it was probably when she was of about marriageable age that she began to take complete possession of Sappho's thoughts. The girl's own attitude is fully revealed in a letter which she wrote to Sappho and which has come to light in a partly illegible manuscript of the seventh century A. D.[19] It seems that Sappho had taken her daughter Kleïs and some of the girls, including Atthis, to stay during the hot summer months in the cool, wooded uplands, perhaps on the slopes of the Lesbian Olym-

[18] Terentianus Maurus: *On Metres,* vi, 390 (Keil).

[19] *Berliner Klassikertexte* P. 9722, 1. Restored by J. M. Edmonds: *Lyra Græca,* i, p. 239.

pus; but in the autumn, when the chestnuts were ripe, and the air chilly, Sappho could hardly be persuaded to return to the city, although her young companions were tired of their rustic life and were eager to go back to Mitylene. At last one day she promised to take them home on the morrow; but at midmorning she was still in bed, and Atthis, impatient to be off, wrote her this letter which, I suppose, was to be sent in to her by a servant, and which Sappho afterwards put into verse. It reads:

> "Sappho, I swear I will not love you any more! O, do get up for our sakes, and release [20] your beloved strength from the bed, and, like a spotless lily beside the pool, take off your *Chian* [night] dress and bathe in the water. And Kleïs will bring from your boxes a saffron *lōpē* [upper garment] and a purple *peplos* [dress] and a *chlaine* [cloak] shall be put over you, and you shall be crowned with flowers wreathed about your head, and so you will come, sweet with the beauty with which you make me mad. And Praxinoa will roast us some chestnuts so that I may make the girls a grander breakfast; since one of the gods has granted us a favor. This very day Sappho, the sweetest of all women, has promised that, like a mother with her children, she will go back with us to Mitylene, the belovedest of all cities."

When they had returned to the city Atthis began to receive attentions from various young men, and Sappho was racked with jealousy, her passion for the beautiful girl being now overwhelming. In this state of mind it seems that she wrote the famous ode [21] which is preserved in a work on

[20] Set free, loosen, unharness, or unleash.

[21] This ode has sometimes been thought to refer to Anaktoria, but it was much more probably written to Atthis, since the poems given

The Sublime written by Longinus, a Greek philosopher of the third century A. D., and which reads:

> "Peer of gods he seemeth to me, that man who sits before thee, and close beside thee listens to thy sweet voice and thy lovely laughter—this, this indeed, causes the heart in my breast to tremble. For if I but see thee a little moment my voice fails me, my tongue is broken, and straightway beneath the flesh impalpable fire runs. Mine eyes see nothing, there is a roaring in my ears, sweat runs down, a tremor seizes me altogether, I am paler than grass, and death itself seems not far off. But now, since I must lack, I must endure all . . ."

These verses, except for the last line, have been put into Sapphic meter [22] by J. A. Symonds, as follows:

> "Peer of gods he seemeth to me, the blissful
> Man who sits and gazes at thee before him,
> Close beside thee sits, and in silence hears thee
> Silverly speaking,
> Laughing love's low laughter. Oh this, this only
> Stirs the troubled heart in my breast to tremble!
> For should I but see thee a little moment,
> Straight is my voice hushed;
> Yea, my tongue is broken, and through and through me
> 'Neath the flesh impalpable fire runs tingling;
> Nothing see mine eyes, and a noise of roaring
> Waves in my ear sounds;

in the next chapter show that Anaktoria had been the particular friend of Atthis rather than of Sappho.

[22] "*Peer* of *gods* he *seem*eth to *me,* the *bliss*ful . . ." the accent falling on the syllable in italics; and in the fourth line, "*sil*verly *speak*ing." I will refer more fully to this meter in Chapter Sixteen.

Sweat runs down in rivers, a tremor seizes
All my limbs, and paler than grass in autumn,
Caught by pains of menacing death, I falter,
Lost in the love-trance."

"Is it not amazing," writes Longinus in commenting upon this Ode, "how Sappho beats and drives into it soul and body, hearing, speech, sight, and flesh, all as separate things, and by contraries is both frozen and burnt up, is mad and is sane, and indeed is afraid she is nearly dead, so that she expresses not one emotion but a concourse of emotions?" And in the same connection Plutarch says,[23] "Sappho fully deserves to be reckoned amongst the Muses. The Romans tell how Cacus, son of Vulcan, sent forth fire and flames from his mouth; and Sappho utters words really mingled with flames, and gives vent through her song to the fire that consumes her heart."

Now, at this time there was a school of poetry and music at Mitylene, of which the mistress was a certain Andromeda, while one of the teachers, perhaps, was a woman named Gorgo,[24] a discarded friend of Sappho's, about whom one revealing line has been left us—

"I am very tired of Gorgo." [25]

This Andromeda presently made overtures to the beautiful Atthis, inviting her to leave Sappho; and on hearing this the distracted poetess wrote some verses to her beloved, a fragment of which is quoted by Athenæus [26] with the note that the words referred to Andromeda.

[23] Plutarch: *Amatorius,* 18.
[24] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii).
[25] Aldus: *Cornucopia,* 268 B.
[26] Athenæus, i, 38.

"What is this countrified woman in countrified clothes who has bewitched your heart, though she knows not enough to arrange her dress about her legs?"

But Atthis had listened to the voice of the temptress, and was making up her mind to go to this school, whereupon the heartbroken Sappho wrote to her, quoting the letter which Atthis had written that day when they were about to come back from the hills to Mitylene, and adding:

"Darling Atthis, can you then forget all this that happened in the old days?"

And in another poem,[27] perhaps addressed to her, she wrote:

"When I look at you, it seems to me that Hermione [daughter of Helen] was never such as you are, and that it is right to liken you rather to Helen herself than to any mortal girl; and I tell you I render your beauty the sacrifice of all my thoughts, and worship you with all my senses."

Perhaps for a little while Atthis, beguiled by these protestations, came back to her, for there is a quotation preserved in a passage of a letter [28] written by the Emperor Julian the Apostate to his friend Iamblichus in the fourth century A. D., which reads:

" 'You are come, and all is well. I was longing for you, and now you have made my heart to flame up and burn with love. Bless you, I say, thrice bless you, and for just

[27] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 14.
[28] Julian: *Letters,* 60.

so long as you and I have been parted,' as the beautiful Sappho says."

The original words may have been addressed to Atthis, as also may another line of Sappho's quoted for grammatical reasons by Herodian: [29]

"Sweet one, to you from whom I had been wholly separated I am brought back."

But Atthis no longer loved her, and, indeed, one may suppose that her parents or guardians were doing their best to separate them; and four lines quoted by Hephæstion [30] reveal Sappho's sorrow:

"Love, the limb-loosener, shakes me—that creature fatal, bitter-sweet; but you, Atthis, have come to hate the thought of me, and have run off to Andromeda instead."

Sappho's anger against Andromeda was intense, and is perhaps expressed in two surviving fragments. The first is the bitter remark:

"Andromeda has driven a pretty bargain!" [31]

and the other is a taunt preserved by Stobæus [32] in about the sixth century A. D., with the note that it was addressed by Sappho to a "countrified woman," in whom we can hardly fail to see the "countrified" Andromeda who could not arrange her skirts aright:

[29] Herodian: *Words Without Parallel*, ii, 932. 29 (Lentz).
[30] Hephæstion, 46.
[31] Hephæstion, 87.
[32] Stobæus: *Anthology*, 4, 12.

"When you die, there will be no remembrance of you thereafter, for you have no part in the roses of Pieria; [33] but you will wander obscure in the house of Death, drifting about amongst the forgotten dead."

Atthis made an attempt to explain her behavior, and Sappho writes: [34]

". . . She was sobbing at leaving me, and she said, 'Alas!—how terribly we have suffered! Sappho, I swear that it is against my own wishes that I leave you.' I answered, 'Go the way of your own happiness, but remember me, for you know how I loved you, or, if you do not remember, let me remind you of what you have forgotten—how fond and beautiful was the life we led together; for with many a wreath of mingled violets and sweet roses you used to deck your long hair at my side, and your slender throat with many a necklace woven of a hundred flowers; and with various scents, both precious and even royal, you used to perfume your beautiful young body in my bosom, and, lying upon a luxurious bed, you used to have from the hands of my gentle slave-girls all that the most fastidious Ionian [35] could desire; and there was no hill, nor sacred grove, nor stream, which we did not visit together, nor ever did the gathering sounds of early spring fill any wood with the chorus of the nightingales, but you wandered thither wth me . . .' "

Then, in the same manuscript, comes the last, sad cry:

[33] That is to say the literature of poetry, Pieria being the traditional home of poetry.

[34] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 2.

[35] The Ionians were notorious for their luxury. See Chapter Fourteen.

"I shall never see Atthis [86] again, and indeed I might as well be dead."

There is, however, an anodyne for sorrow which is a gift from heaven to every poet, namely the ability to pour forth the heart's grief in song, and to create out of the secret turmoil of the emotions a tale to tell openly, which, in the public telling, rids the poet of his private pain. In beautiful verses which must have formed an enthralling sequence, Sappho told the story of her love for Atthis, and published them for all to read, covering the whole episode, in her inimitable way, with a gossamer so lovely and so pure that even the doubtfully acceptable description of her physical emotions does not offend. That is the remarkable fact about her poetry: it never offends, even though it says so much that is not said by others without offense; but, somehow, by means of a faultless instinct, she carries us unspotted through the deluge of her passions, and thus—even when we see Atthis taken from her apparently by the girl's anxious guardians—retains the ancient reputation of having been the most exquisite spirit ever incarnated.

From this time onwards she knew that to love as she loved was to court sorrow and suffering; and the epithet *glukupikros,* "bitter-sweet," which she uses to describe the god of Love, was apparently invented by her.[87] Love, she says, is

"a weaver of fictions,"

and

"a bringer of pain." [88]

[86] The name "Atthis" is lost but it fits the meter.
[87] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii) 9.
[88] Idem.

She says:

> "As for me, love has shaken my mind as a down-rushing wind that falls upon the oak-trees." [39]

and yet she calls it

> "the belovedest offspring of Earth and Heaven." [40]

These events seem to carry forward the story of Sappho's life to somewhere around the year 580 B. C. when her age was thirty-two. It was at about this date that Pittakos, the Tyrant of Mitylene, laid down the reins of government, and, feeling that he was growing old and that his public usefulness was past, retired into private life. The citizens, in recognition of his services, made him a present of a fine house and estate; but he would accept only a part of it, and the rest he consecrated to the gods.[41] He lived on in this retirement, we read, for another ten years, simple in his habits, uncouth in appearance, renowned for his practical wisdom, respected by all men, and no longer even laughed at, so far as we know, by Alkaios who had now become a law-abiding citizen, famous as an inspired, if rather drunken, poet.

Meanwhile Periander, Tyrant of Corinth, had died there, full of sorrows and anxieties, but leaving a name for wisdom which did not perish. Upon his tomb the Corinthians caused this epitaph to be inscribed: "This sea-beaten land of Corinth in her bosom doth here embrace her ruler Periander, greatest of all men for his wealth and wisdom." [42] But Diogenes Laertius declares that he had heard it said that the tomb did not contain the Tyrant's body, and he gives an

[39] Idem.
[40] Pausanias, ix, 27, 2.
[41] Diogenes Laertius: *Pittakos.*
[42] Diogenes Laertius: *Periander.*

account of the manner of his death which, though improbable as history, is interesting as an instance of the great care which was expected to be taken in ancient times by those who feared their enemies, to prevent their bones being dug up and scattered during some later outcry against their memory.

Periander, he says, being desirous of ending his life, devised this ingenious method both of committing suicide and of concealing his body. He sent for two professional assassins, and, telling them in secret that there was a man whom he wished to be removed from this earth, instructed them to proceed along a certain road at a certain hour that night, and to kill and carefully bury the first man they should meet, who, by private information, he said he knew would be this enemy of his, after which they were to continue their way along the road. He then sent for four other assassins, and told them that he wanted them to dispose of two men whom they would meet walking along this same road; and, having sent them off with orders to walk straight ahead after they had done their work, he notified one of his captains that four men would be found upon this road at a certain hour that night, and commanded him to waylay them with a body of soldiers and to kill them all.

Periander, bent on suicide, then went out, disguised, and placed himself in the way of the first two assassins, who, not recognizing him, killed him and buried him; but presently they were attacked and murdered by the four other hired assassins, and these four in turn were cut down by the soldiers. Thus the secret of his place of burial was secured, and his body was made safe from disinterment.

This period of Sappho's life coincides with a very important period in the history of Lydia, the kingdom which lay behind the Æolian and Ionian colonies on the adjacent coast of Asia Minor; and to this part of the world, where East met West, we must now turn our attention.

Chapter Ten

THE KINGDOM OF LYDIA, AND ITS RELATIONS WITH LESBOS

MENTION has been made of Anaktoria, a girl from Miletus who was one of Sappho's *hetæræ* at the time when Atthis was the bright particular star of that sparkling company. Maximus of Tyre [1] names her with Atthis as having inspired more than friendship in the susceptible heart of the little poetess; but Suidas seems to recognize a distinction in that regard between her and Atthis. Ovid,[2] using material which is now lost, makes Sappho describe her as *vilis,* "of no account"; but there is a surviving poem by Sappho which shows that at any rate she was very fond of the girl, and was grieved and a little hurt when she married and went away to live in Sardis, the capital of Lydia.

This poem, which has been recovered from the sands of Egypt,[3] is written in the form of a letter addressed to Anaktoria some time after her marriage, perhaps as a reproof for her not having written. It reads:

> "The fairest thing in all the world some say is a company of horsemen, and some say a regiment of marching soldiers, and some again a fleet of ships; but to me it is the heart's beloved—and how altogether easy it is to make this obvious to everybody! When Helen, who was the most beautiful of mortals, chose as the best of men the

[1] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii).

[2] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv, 15.

[3] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, i, i B. Partly restored by Hunt, Edmonds, and others. The last dozen words are conjectural.

destroyer of Troy's honor, she did not think at all of her child or of her dear parent, but was led away by Love to give her heart to one from afar; for a woman is always easily mastered who values little what is near and dear. Nevertheless, you ought to remember us, Anaktoria, now that we here are separated from you, the sweet sound of whose footstep I would rather hear, and the brightness of whose smiling face I would rather see, than all the chariots and mail-clad soldiers of Lydia. I know that in this world one cannot look for perfection; yet for you to want still to have a share in what was once shared, is surely better than to forget it."

Anaktoria had been very fond of Atthis, and another poem,[4] perhaps the most beautiful of all Sappho's known compositions, is addressed to the latter, apparently after Sappho had at last received a letter from Lydia. It reads:

"Atthis, our dear Anaktoria lives in far-off Sardis, but (she says) she often sends her thoughts hither, and remembers how once we used to pass our time—in those days when you were like a goddess manifest to her, and she loved your singing the best of all. Now amongst the ladies of Lydia she shines like the moon-goddess when the sun is setting and amidst the stars around her she is touched with rosy red.[5] But when the moon spreads her light over the briny sea and over the fields of flowers where the dew lies so fair upon the ground, when the roses lift themselves up, and the delicate *anthryska* and

[4] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 5. The first eight words before 'Sardis' are conjectural.

[5] The word is *brododaktulos,* "fingered with rose." Sappho means that Anaktoria is like the red, rising moon, still tinged by the light of Atthis, her sun.

the honey-clover have all their petals open, then our beloved wanders out, and, remembering the love of gentle Atthis, her tender breast is deeply weighed with longing. Ah, then she calls aloud to us to come to her, and of what she says we are not ignorant, you and I, for leafy Night of the many sounds speaks it to us through the space between."

It may be that Anaktoria was nervous about marriage when first the matter was proposed to her, for there is a mutilated fragment of a poem [6] by Sappho addressed in such a situation to a girl who may have been Anaktoria:

"And I answered you, 'I swear to you by the goddess that although I, like you, had of Zeus but one virginity, yet I did not fear that threshold beyond which Hera had bidden me cast it away.' Thus, indeed, I gave you courage, and cried aloud, 'That marriage-night was sweet enough to me, and neither have you anything to fear.' "

And in another fragment,[7] seemingly concerned with the same subject, Sappho writes:

"Indeed, I tell you, I prayed that that night of ours might be made twice as long."

But perhaps this reference was to no nuptial occasion.

The marriage of Anaktoria to a man living in Sardis brings our somewhat tardy attention to the land of Lydia which, being so close to Lesbos, always exerted a strong influence upon life in Mitylene. Herodotus [8] tells us that the Lydians

[6] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 3, restored by Edmonds.
[7] Libanius: *Orations,* i, 402.
[8] Herodotus, i, 93, 94.

had much the same customs as the Greeks, except in reference to their girls; for in regard to the latter he says that it was the custom for all well-brought-up young girls of the respectable middle and lower classes to serve for a while as public courtesans in the temple of the patron goddess, receiving the usual fees from the men who came to them there, and thus by their own efforts collecting sufficient money for their marriage-dowries without burdening their parents. A girl, when she reached the required age, was taken by her proud parents to the temple, where, after being given some preliminary religious and practical instruction, she was left amongst the throng of young women who gathered there in their spare hours, each attempting under strict rules of modesty to catch the fancy of a male visitor, thus honorably to enrich herself at the same time that she paid her sacred devotions to the goddess by this act.

This highly esteemed custom, which was believed to have divine sanction and hence to be of the very essence of respectability, was of venerable origin and widespread observance in Asia Minor and the East, and, indeed, legislation against it had to be introduced in the laws of Moses,[9] parents being forbidden to take their daughters out for this purpose. The system, however, was believed to have many advantages: it insured, for instance, that a bride who was physically attractive would also have the money to make a good marriage, and thus it prevented that deterioration of the race which was likely to result from the otherwise usual *mariages de convenance,* against which, as we have seen, Solon had recently been legislating at Athens, wherein the most eligible young men were so often wedded to ill-favored young women because the more beautiful and more eugenically desirable girls were poor. Then again, it enabled young men and women to obtain, under religious sanction, a more thorough

[9] Leviticus, xix, 29; Deuteronomy, xxiii, 17.

knowledge of each other before entering upon matrimony than could ever be acquired with propriety in countries where this system was not in operation. Its advantage, too, over the alternative systems—the state-controlled houses of Athens, the huge establishment of professional prostitutes attached to the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth, and so forth—was that it did away with a particular class of women debarred from marriage and forced to persevere in this one tedious profession; and thus it spread the burden of human weakness equally over the nation's womanhood, and made a decent observance, confined to youth, out of what was elsewhere usually regarded as a rather scandalous but necessary and specialized business continued over half a lifetime and generally liquidated in wreckage.

What has to be said against it is, of course, so obvious to our own way of thinking that it need not even be put into words; but because an ancient custom seems strange and horrifying to our modern minds, trained as they are to think along other lines, it does not follow either that it was unpardonable in the Lydians or that it seemed outrageous to the Greeks. Herodotus speaks of it quite casually; and in the neighboring Lesbos, in the days of Sappho, it must have been a matter of no astonishment to anybody. Thus we must think of the maidens who frequented the house of the poetess as being not only devoid of innocence like all the girls of that period and part of the world, but also as being worldly-wise to the extent of being entirely prepared for all the surprises that the lottery of sex could possibly hold for them. This is a point which should be held in mind, so that we may not think of Sappho as a corrupter of chaste maidenhood. In Lesbos there was hardly such a thing as innocence: physical inexperience was the nearest approach to it. In Lydia there was hardly such a thing as physical inexperience.

The northwestern frontier of this kingdom was no more

than five-and-twenty miles southeast of Mitylene, and its capital, Sardis, but ninety miles distant, for all that Sappho calls it "far-away." Lydia proper was a small country of dream-like beauty, wedged in between Mysia and Caria, forming the middle section of the western side of Asia Minor, and itself divided by the long range of the Tmolus mountains which ran east and west across it. North of this range, and between it and the Temnus, mountains which for many miles marked the frontier of Mysia, lay the luxuriant valley of the Hermus river, one of the most beautiful regions in the world; and south of it was the almost equally charming valley of the Caystrus, famous for its innumerable swans. Only one area of Lydia was infertile, namely the Katakekaumene, or "Burnt lands," a volcanic region in the east, around the frontiers of Phrygia; yet even out of this wilderness there flowed the Hermus and also the Mæander, whose winding, lazy course through Caria gave us our word "meander."

Unfortunately for the Lydians their seacoast, together with its hinterland, had been colonized by Ionian Greeks, just as the shores of Mysia, to the north of Lydia and opposite Lesbos, had been settled by Æolians; and city-states such as Smyrna, Kolophon, Ephesus, Priene, and Miletus, and the islands of Chios, Samos, and others, possessed the harbors and the mouths of the Lydian rivers, and cut the kingdom off from the Ægean. It was shut up inland in its little paradise by this ribbon of Greek colonies along and off its coast, and in the days of Sappho its efforts to free itself and to burst through to the blue water provided the outstanding movements of the time, and were a recurrent cause of anxiety in Lesbos.

The history of Lydia begins, so far as we are concerned, with the accession of King Gugu, or, as the Greeks called him, Gyges, in 687 B. C., three-quarters of a century before Sappho was born. Gugu in earlier life was a wealthy military officer and an intimate friend and boon-companion of Kandaules,

the reigning king; and the story, told by Herodotus,[10] of the curious circumstances under which he, Gugu, obtained the throne is worthy of repetition, since it helps us to understand the morals of the age.

King Kandaules, whom we may picture as a somewhat foolish young man of artistic temperament, happened, by one of those rare chances which occasionally are met with in history, to be very much in love with the Queen; and one of the peculiar symptoms of his condition was his inability to refrain from telling his friend what an exceedingly beautiful figure she had when undressed, and, indeed, how exquisite were all those charms which were displayed to himself alone. Gugu, of course, found these confidences both embarrassing and alarming, and he deemed it best to show only a mild, polite interest in the matter; but the King mistook his uneasiness for incredulity. "I see, Gugu," he said, "that you do not believe what I tell you about the Queen's figure. But since men trust their eyes more than their ears, how would it be if we were to devise some plan by which you could yourself see her in a state of nature?" [11]

His friend was greatly shocked, for, as Herodotus points out, the Lydians were no less bashful about nakedness than they were unabashed in regard to their carnal weaknesses. "What a very unwise thing to suggest, sir!" he exclaimed. "Can you really wish me to see my Queen *naked?* Do you not realize that a woman doffs her dignity with her clothes? There is an old saying, 'Let each man behold his own,' and it is enough that I acknowledge your wife to have the most beautiful face in the world. I beg you not to ask me to pursue the matter further than that." I suppose he was trembling as

[10] Herodotus, i, 8, ff.

[11] The conversation is given by Herodotus, and represents the version of the story as it was recorded in verse by Archilochos the Parian, who wrote in the time of Gyges.

he spoke, for he must have seen unlimited possibilities of danger to himself in whatever direction, and however warily, he moved.

"Do not be frightened, Gugu," said the King. "I will so arrange it that she shall never know that you have seen her. I will place you behind the open door of my bedroom; for when I enter to go to bed, she follows me. Close to the door there is a chair upon which she always lays her clothes one by one as she takes them off, and you will thus be able to make a considerable study of her figure. Then, when she is moving from the chair to the bed, and her back is turned to you, you can slip out, taking care that she does not see you."

Gugu was obliged to agree to this plan, but its execution was bungled, and the Queen caught sight of him as he made his exit. She did not scream, however, nor show by so much as the movement of an eyelid that she had noticed his presence; but her intuition told her that the plot had been devised by her husband, and, feeling herself grossly insulted, she determined to be revenged upon him. In the morning, therefore, she sent for Gugu, and having called to her some armed officers upon whose services she could rely, she coldly addressed him in these terms:

"Gugu," she said, "you may take your choice of the only two courses that are open to you. Either kill the King, marry me, and thus obtain the throne, or die this moment. Not again, obeying all your sovereign's commands, shall you look at what it is not lawful for you to see. It is essential either that he shall perish by whose proposal this thing was done, or that you, who saw me without my clothes on, and thus broke our customs, shall perish, yourself."

To save his own life, Gugu agreed to murder her over-enthusiastic husband, whereupon the Queen insisted that this retribution should descend upon the unfortunate young man upon the very spot where she had been disgraced. That night,

therefore, Gugu went again into the royal bedroom, and stabbed the King as he lay asleep in the cold arms of his blood-thirsty wife, after which he married the unpleasant woman, and obtained the throne, though not without some serious rioting, hostility to him only ceasing when in answer to his request for a ruling from the oracle at Delphi he received a reply favorable to his sovereignty. In return he made a present to Delphi of a vast number of gold and silver goblets and other vessels, some of which Herodotus saw there in the treasury.

As soon as he was safe upon the throne he made an armed attempt to free his country from the loose overlordship of Assyria, the great eastern empire which had spread its authority over most of Asia Minor; and as part of his plan of campaign he financed an expedition of Ionian and Carian mercenary soldiers to Egypt to help the Pharaoh of that country in his struggle against the same enemy. Having had some success in this war, he turned his attention to the Greek colonies of Miletus, Smyrna, and Kolophon, so as to open a way to the sea; but only the last-named fell before his attack.

In the reign of his son, Ardys, Miletus was again attacked without success, but the colony of Priene went down before him. Ardys was succeeded by his son Sadyattes, who, after a short tenure of the throne, died in 617 B. C., leaving the crown to his son Alyattes, whose long reign of fifty-seven years covered practically the whole life of Sappho. The new monarch quickly captured Smyrna, and one by one the other Greek colonies on his seaboard passed into his hands, but were allowed to retain their independence, tribute, however, being exacted from them. Only Miletus, under its Tyrant Thrasybulos, the friend of Periander of Corinth, successfully resisted him, and in the end a treaty of peace with that city-state was signed which proved to be the basis of a lasting friendship and led to many intermarriages between Lydians

and Milesians, one of which was that of Anaktoria, Sappho's friend, whose home was in Miletus, to a Lydian of Sardis.

Under the strong and restless rule of Alyattes the power of Lydia spread steadily eastwards until its frontier on that side was pushed forward to the river Halys which rose between Pontus and Armenia Minor and, passing down into Cappadocia, thence swept northwards through Galatia to the Euxine or Black Sea. The empire of the Medes, however, which had now supplanted that of the Assyrians, extended westwards over Armenia, and thus confronted this new empire of the Lydians; and a long war between the two nations ensued. Hostilities ended at length owing to the dread inspired on both sides by an eclipse of the sun, an event which by astronomical calculation can be dated to the year 585 B. C., shortly after Sappho's return from her exile in Sicily; and the peace was sealed by the marriage of a daughter of Alyattes to the King of Media.

By about the year 580 B. C.—the date, that is to say, to which the events in Sappho's life have now brought us—Alyattes had attained a position of supremacy in the affairs of this part of the world, and the personal wealth accumulated by him by means of trade, internal taxation, and foreign tribute, was enormous. His son and heir, in whom he placed the greatest confidence, was the afterwards celebrated Crœsus or Kroisos, as the Greeks called him, who had been born in about 603 B. C., and was now some twenty-three years of age. This young man appears to have been the moving spirit in the aggressive policy of the Lydians; and I think it is to this time that we should assign the building of a great Lydian fleet with which Crœsus hoped one day to attack Lesbos and the Ægean islands, although Herodotus puts the project somewhat later.[12]

News of this ship-building activity seems to have reached

[12] Herodotus, i, 27.

Lesbos at about the time when Pittakos laid down the scepter of Tyrant of Mitylene; and as a private individual he now paid a visit to Sardis, the Lydian capital, where, perhaps in the absence of Alyattes, he was entertained by Crœsus. The young prince asked him if there were any news of importance from the Greek world, and to this Pittakos replied:

"Yes, sir, the islanders are collecting a force of ten thousand cavalry for the purpose of invading your country." [13]

"Cavalry?" exclaimed Crœsus. "Ah, I only wish the gods *would* put such a thought into their heads as to attack our Lydians with cavalry!"—cavalry being an arm of the service in which Lydia was overwhelmingly strong.

"It seems," smiled Pittakos, "that you are eager to catch the islanders on horseback on the mainland, for you well know what the result would be. Just so!—and what do you think the islanders desire more than to catch the Lydians at sea?" And he went on to explain that he had only invented the story of this mobilizing of the cavalry in order to show Crœsus the absurdity of attempting to attack these sea-going Greeks with ships. Crœsus is said to have been greatly impressed by these words, and to have abandoned his project, thereby relieving the Ægean skies of a dark cloud which had greatly scared the Lesbians.

The Lydians, indeed, were no hardy sailors, and amidst the beauties of their own richly favored country they were much better adapted to agriculture and industry; while the fact that the main caravan-route—the "Royal Highroad," as Herodotus calls it [14]—passed through Lydia on its way from the Ægean to the Euphrates and the Orient, gave them a pre-eminent position in trade. Their wealth had led them into

[13] Herodotus is doubtful whether Pittakos or the wise Bias of Priene was the hero of this incident, but the details seem to point to the former.

[14] Herodotus, v. 52.

ways of great luxury; and although their literature is now entirely lost, although only a few words of their language are known, and but little of their art or architecture has survived, there are many references in antiquity to their cultured and elegant life. They excelled in the manufacture of rich stuffs, and their dyed woolen materials and also their carpets were in great demand in Greece. They were famous for their music, and their love of games and athletics was notorious, while, as inveterate gamblers, they are said to have been the inventors of dice and to have introduced the pernicious little cubes into the Greek world. It has already been mentioned, too, that the idea of a coinage is thought to have originated in Lydia. The early Lydian coins, of the time of Alyattes, I may mention, are made of electrum, stamped on one side with a lion's head or with the figure of the king, while those of the reign of Crœsus are of gold and silver.

Lydian cookery was carried to a high degree of perfection, and at least two of their recipes were highly esteemed by the Greeks.[15] One of these was of a sauce called *karuke,* which, according to Athenæus, was described in almost every cookery-book of the ancient world, and consisted in the main of red-gravy and spices. The other was of a dish called *kandaulos,* and comprised boiled meat, thick gravy, bread-crumbs, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, grapes, pickles, honey, a dash of wine, and a taste of aniseed.

With rather startling naïveté Athenæus remarks that "the luxury of the Lydians reached such a pitch that they were the first people to discover how to make women sterile by surgical operation . . . thereafter employing female instead of male eunuchs." [16] The practice, however, can hardly be classed under the heading of "luxury," although what Athenæus means is apparent, namely that men's indulgence

[15] Athenæus, xii, 12.
[16] Athenæus, xii, 11.

was thus comfortably relieved of its consequences: it was in reality a religious custom, I believe, corresponding to that of the mutilating of the priests of the Lydian sun-god Attis. All the priests of this Deity were eunuchs, who wore women's clothes and allowed their hair to grow long; and since the priestesses of Cybele, the great Lydian mother-goddess, are represented in early drawings as carrying battle-axes and dancing with shield and bow in hand, one may well suppose that they had been unsexed as had the priests of Attis.

Now the legend of the existence of a race of man-hating, masculine women, the Amazons, originated in this part of the world; and it is sometimes thought that the myth is to be traced to early travelers' tales either about the emasculated priests of Attis who were dressed like women, or about these priestesses of Cybele who were armed like men. But the key to the problem, I think, is supplied by this remark of Athenæus; and in view of the well-known fact that male characteristics quickly reveal themselves in females who have thus passed through the hands of the surgeon, the origin of the fabulous Amazons in my opinion is to be hunted down to these priestesses of the mother-goddess—not so much because they brandished ceremonial battle-axes as because they were a company of deep-voiced, hearty, slightly-mustached women who had nothing feminine about them except their figures, and whose interest in men had entirely evaporated.

A few words must be added in regard to Sardis, the royal city where Alyattes and his son Crœsus lived. It stood in the beautiful valley of the Hermus river, on the banks of the Pactolus, which flowed down from the Tmolus range and joined the Hermus some three miles further down. Mount Tmolus, nearly six thousand feet high, towered up into the sky only a few miles to the south, its lower slopes covered with vineyards and its higher with fir-forests; and, in fact, the precipitous rock upon which the citadel, the treasury,

and the palace were built was a sudden outcrop from the foot of this mountain. The rest of the city stood in the plain beneath this rock, on both sides of the noisy little Pactolus, which flowed right through the market-place, its bed glittering with the gold-dust washed down from the highlands of Tmolus, where gold and electrum were plentiful, and where mining operations were constantly conducted.

The citadel and the other magnificent buildings which crowned the rock were surrounded by a triple wall—of which some ruins still remain—thus forming what appeared to be a single group, dazzling white against the sky by day, red-gold at sunset, and silver by the light of the moon; but the lower part of the city also contained a number of great edifices, one of the finest of which was the temple of Cybele on the banks of the Pactolus. Here there was a park-like garden, so thickly planted with trees that the sun's rays hardly penetrated anywhere through the foliage; and it was in this sacred and mysterious area, where the nightingales sang so sweetly beneath the summer stars, that the houses stood wherein the Lydian girls collected their marriage-dowries in the manner already described, for which reason the place was called the Garden of the Sweet Embrace.[17] Near here were temples, too, dedicated to Attis, to Medeus, the supreme god, and to other deities; and beside the Royal Highroad which passed through the city, linking the eastern and western worlds, stood the great warehouses of the merchants.

All the Lydian Kings since the days of Gyges had been fabulously wealthy,[18] and the palace was a treasury of works of art; but Alyattes was the richest of his line, and the tomb which he was now constructing for himself was one of the greatest monuments in the world. It stood on the north side of the Hermus, four or five miles from the city, and a little

[17] Athenæus, xii, 11.
[18] Strabo, xiii, 626; Pollux, iii, 87; vii, 98.

south of the piece of water known as the Lake of Gyges. It was a mound of earth, over two hundred and fifty feet high and two hundred and eighty in diameter, having a circumference of half a mile. Around its base was a platform of immense blocks of stone, and on its summit was a structure whereon stood five huge phallic monoliths like obelisks. Within the mound was the burial-chamber, constructed of polished marble blocks; and the tunnel-like passage leading to it was as yet open against the day when the King should be carried along it to his last resting-place, to the wail of the famous Lydian flute-players, and the cries of the mourning-women.

Over a wide area around this huge tumulus, upon which at this time the levies of laboring men and girls were as busy as ants on an ant-heap, the necropolis of the city was spread; and beyond it lay the open fields, where corn and saffron were chiefly grown—the latter for the dyeing of those materials which were sent from the famous Lydian looms all over the Greek world. To-day these fields are tilled by Turkish peasants, and the rambling village of Sart marks the site of splendid Sardis; but the burial-mound of Alyattes still remains, and on its summit is still to be seen one of those five sacred pillars. The burial-chamber, however, was found to be empty when the excavators entered it in modern times, and a handful of ashes was all that was left of the father of Crœsus.

Chapter Eleven

A SUPPOSED VISIT OF SAPPHO TO THE ISLAND OF SAMOS

ONE of the poems of Sappho discovered in Egypt[1] takes the form of a prayer to the goddess Hera, patroness of women, that she may grant the poetess a safe passage back to Mitylene after a tour abroad. It is so mutilated that much of its meaning is conjectural; but, such as it is, it seems to read as follows:

> "O queenly Hera, take present shape beside me down from my dreams, in that beautiful form which once appeared at the summons of the Kings, the sons of Atreus, who, when they had brought to an end the destruction of Troy, and first were setting out hither from the river Scamander's rushing stream, were unable to win home, and were then obliged to entreat thee, and great Zeus, and Thyone's beloved child (Dionysos). And now, I beseech thee, Lady, that, as in the past, so again I may do things pure and beautiful amongst the maidens of Mitylene whom so often I have taught to dance and sing at thy festivals; and even as the sons of Atreus by grace of thee and thy fellow-gods set out from Troy, so in prayer I entreat thee, protect me upon this my returning voyage."

It is impossible, of course, to say with any certainty what was the country from which Sappho was returning home,

[1] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, i, ii B; restored by Edmonds and von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff.

British Museum

A BRONZE STATUETTE OF A WOMAN WEARING A COSTUME OF THE PERIOD OF SAPPHO

Athenische Mitteilungen, 1906

A HEADLESS SEATED STATUE OF AIAKES, SON OF BRYSON, PROBABLY FATHER OF THE TYRANT POLYKRATES, ABOUT 570 B.C., FOUND AT SAMOS

but since the chief seat of the worship of the goddess Hera was in the island of Samos, a journey by sea of about a hundred and fifty miles from Lesbos, it may be that she had paid a visit to this place. It can hardly be supposed, at any rate, that she did not at some time go to stay in Samos, a recognized center of Greek culture; and it is necessary, therefore, to give some account here of this famous island.

It lay off the southern coast of Lydia, being separated from the mainland by no more than a mile of water. As the crow flies it was only some eighty miles south of Mitylene; but the promontory which had the island of Chios at its end projected out into the sea between it and Lesbos, and thus made the journey between the two islands nearly twice as long as that. Samos was very much smaller than Lesbos, being only about twenty-seven miles in length from east to west, and fourteen miles broad at its widest; but the Samians were an enterprising, adventurous people, and already in Sappho's day their sea-girt home was famous as a commercial center, and the capital, also called Samos, was one of the richest and most luxurious cities of the Greek world, and one of the most powerful in the Ionian confederacy.

Samos, the city, stood on the southeastern coast of the island, facing the mainland across the straits, backed by a tremendous amphitheater of hills which, in a series of peaks and ridges, mounted up to the majestic heights of Ampelos, whose summit was nearly five thousand feet above sea-level and was often enveloped in cloud. The acropolis was built upon one of the lower foothills, immediately overlooking the harbor and its busy wharfs; and from its battlements a view of the whole extent of the city could be obtained, the houses clustering around this citadel and spreading out over the low ground near the sea, and up the seemingly hazardous slopes of the hills behind. A mole nearly a quarter of a

mile in length protected the harbor, and in its shelter there were always to be seen some units of that fleet of triremes for which Samos was famous. These vessels were painted bright red,[2] and thus must have provided astonishing notes of color as they lay in the sun at anchor upon the vivid, turquoise mirror of the harbor, in which were reflected also the sunny, white-walled, red-roofed houses at the water's edge, the richly gilded and painted temples, and the verdant foliage of the trees. Under the blue sky, and in the clear air of the Ægean which dispelled the sense of distance and brought the green and purple hills and mountains close up to the eye, the impact of these colors must have been dazzling; and one can imagine that the gaze was lifted not without relief to the eastern horizon where, on the mainland across the straits, the softer blue-green heights of Mount Mykale, covered with ilex and wild olive, and the sometimes snow-capped mountains of the distant Latmus range, formed a prospect of tender loveliness.

Along the coast westwards from the city ran the sacred way to the temple of Hera, which stood close to the shore some two miles from Samos, backed by rugged hills. Today this road is lost, but the modern visitor may walk to the ruins of the temple along the beach, fording an occasional stream once bridged over but now running upon an open bed of water-worn stones down from the mountains to the sea. Only one column of the temple has withstood the assault of the years, but modern excavations have proved the correctness of the statement of Herodotus [3] that the building was the largest of its kind he had ever seen. The site is now covered with the fallen fragments of walls and pillars, these being of white marble; and the red tiles of the roof have been found in quantities.

[2] Herodotus, iii, 58.
[3] Herodotus, iii, 60.

The goddess Hera, whom the Romans named Juno, was the wife of Zeus, with whom, however, legend said that she had often quarreled, having been incensed at his infidelities, particularly with mortal maidens, the seduction of whom had led to the birth of such celestial beings as Dionysos and Hercules; and in the process of these quarrels Zeus was related to have beaten her and even to have tied her up. She was represented as a majestic, grave-faced woman, and her own troubled domestic life was thought to have made her very sympathetic in regard to the cares of all women.

Samos was believed to have been the scene of her marriage and also her birthplace, and the Samians pointed out the very spot where she first saw the light amidst the bushes on the bank of a small stream. The whole island, indeed, was sacred to her, she being as closely identified with it as was Aphrodite with Cyprus; and the fact that she was the only goddess who was really *married* led to the development of the idea that her temple was the very shrine of wedlock. Her festival, the Heræa, was celebrated with the greatest magnificence, there being a grand procession of married women, maidens, and young men—the bridegrooms to be, the women decked out in all their finery and the men wearing their armor as a compliment to Ares, the god of war, who was Hera's son. The women afterwards performed certain ceremonial dances, to which Sappho refers in her prayer; and at the close of the day the men deposited their armor before the heaped-up ashes of burnt offerings which, by ancient custom, formed the altar of the goddess. A *hekatombē*, or sacrifice of a hundred oxen, was made at this festival; and the heap of ashes which remained must have been a veritable mound.

In the temple there stood an archaic statue of Hera which had been sculptured by the almost legendary Smilis, an artist whose exact date is unknown, but who seems to have

lived at least a generation before Sappho's time. The figure represented the goddess wearing a high, basket-like head-dress, and draped with a marriage-veil, while from each of her stiffly extended arms there hung what appears to be kerchief or girdle ending in a tassel. This statue was still standing in the dim sanctuary of the temple in the days of Pausanias,[4] in the middle of the second century A. D., and it is represented on the Samian coins,[5] on which, also, Hera's famous peacocks are sometimes shown.

Athenæus [6] says that these peacocks were perhaps indigenous in Samos, and that from thence they were brought to other countries; and he quotes the lines of Antiphanes, the Athenian playwright of the fourth century B. C., which read: "And Hera, Queen of Samos, they say, has reared a golden race of birds, the brilliant, beautiful, conspicuous peacock." In after years these "peacocks of Juno" became famous wherever the goddess was worshiped; but there is no known answer to the question as to when and why their feathers came to be regarded as unlucky, and if I suggest that the ill-luck was derived from an early Christian idea that they were the symbols of a pagan and therefore devilish worship, I am but guessing. Certainly in Sappho's time these peacocks and their magnificent plumage were highly esteemed; and the dim temple-gardens on the edge of the sea must have been loud with their shrill cries each morning when the dawn was coming up behind the mountains across the water.

Amongst the other deities of Samos, Apollo, Artemis, and Poseidon held the highest place, and of the last-named there was an important temple standing upon the rugged promontory a few miles to the east of the city. Upon the Samian

[4] Pausanias, vii, 4, 5.
[5] See Percy Gardner: *Samos and Samian Coins.*
[6] Athenæus, xiv, 70.

coins the forepart of a bull is often represented, and this may have been associated with the worship of Artemis, with whom the bull is closely connected in symbolism, or it may have had some relation to the festival of the Heræa at which the hundred oxen were sacrificed.

In this connection I should mention that the most usual symbol represented on the coins of Samos is a full-faced head of a lion; and it is possible that this figure is related to the famous tale of Elpis of Samos,[7] the prototype of many similar yarns. Elpis was a sailor of ancient times who landed one day on the coast of Africa, and there found himself face to face with a lion whose mouth was open wide. Elpis at once climbed up a tree, whereupon the creature sat down beneath it, and, still with its mouth open, gazed piteously up at the terrified man, who at last realized that the lion had something the matter with its jaw and was asking his aid. Uttering a prayer to his favorite god Dionysos, therefore, he climbed down, and, after a nervous examination, found that a sharp bone was stuck between two of its back teeth. This he removed, whereupon the lion frisked around him in its delight and, galloping off, came bounding back with a dead animal in its mouth, which it presented to him as a token of gratitude and regard. When Elpis returned to his native city he erected at his own expense a shrine to Dionysos, which afterwards became one of the sights of Samos.

The Samians were from early times famous sailors; and, indeed, one cannot approach the island across the narrow straits without picturing it in the imagination as the wave-beaten, secret haven of sea-adventurers of long ago, for dizzy precipices tower sheer up out of the green and purple water, beaten by the ever-restless swell, and one sails dangerously through stupendous chasms into suddenly calm

[7] Pliny: *Natural History*, viii, 16.

bays where the cries of sea-birds echo solitarily from the face of the cliffs and the thunder of the surf outside is left behind. It is hard to realize that inland, in the valleys amidst the hills, the ground is luxuriantly fertile, and that the vineyards and olive-groves were famous. Æschylos,[8] writing early in the fifth century B. C., calls the island *elaiophytos*, which means richly productive of olives; and though the wine of Samos was not considered quite so good as that of Chios and Lesbos,[9] it was abundant and highly esteemed. The roses of Samos, too, were greatly praised, and, in the protected parts of the island, bloomed throughout the year. Flowers of all kinds, in fact, thrived here, and the scent of the aromatic herbs was carried on the breeze far out to sea, so that even in the unlit darkness the returning sailor knew when his home was near.

Herodotus[10] tells the story of a wonderful voyage performed by a Samian sea-captain named Kolaios at about the time when Sappho was born. He was making a journey by way of Crete to Egypt; but after touching at the island of Platea off the Libyan coast, an east wind which blew unceasingly for many days drove him westwards along the shores of North Africa. Abandoning himself to his adventure he then continued his voyage in that direction, and at length came to the Phœnician town of Tartessus on the Spanish coast just beyond Gibraltar. Here he sold his cargo at so high a price and purchased goods of such great value that when at last he returned to Samos, after covering some five thousand miles, he and his companions were rich men. They therefore decided to use a tenth part of their profits in the making of a bronze monument to be set up in the temple of Hera as a memorial of their voyage. It took the form

[8] Æschylos: *Persæ*, 883.
[9] Strabo, xiv, 1.
[10] Herodotus, iv, 152.

of a huge wine-bowl adorned with the heads of griffins, and supported by three colossal kneeling figures seven cubits high; and in the time of Sappho it must have been one of the sights of the temple.

This great bronze monument brings us to the subject of Samian architecture, sculpture, and metal-founding, the latter being an art which the Samians were believed by the Greeks to have invented, but which they actually derived in all probability from Egypt, where it had already been practiced for some two thousand years. At about the time when Sappho was born there was living at Samos a great artist of the name of Rhoikos, the son of Phileas; and the school which he founded was one of the most celebrated in the Greek world, and had raised the reputation of the island in this sphere of art to a height equal to that of Lesbos in the sphere of poetry. Yet there was this difference, that whereas the lyric poets of Lesbos were producing verses which were in no sense archaic and which stood forever afterwards as unsurpassed literary models, the output of the school of Rhoikos was decidedly primitive, and in the succeeding centuries was completely eclipsed by the famous masterpieces which we all know so well.

Poetry, in fact, was generations ahead of scultpure in its development; and in considering the age of Sappho we must not forget this curious fact, that although a high level had been reached in the material comforts and elegances of daily life, although the written language had attained perfection, and although the thought of the time was almost modern in its taste and its precision, if not in its scope, the sculptors' and draughtsmen's abilities were as yet undeveloped. In Egypt, and some other ancient centers of civilization the art of sculpture and delineation attained its zenith before the art of literature, the brush and chisel being far ahead of the pen; but in the Greek world the opposite was

the case, and thus we come upon the paradox of an artist in words, exquisite in thought, living a life of the utmost refinement, and demonstrating all the natural or studied graces in deportment or in the dance, yet being complacently accustomed to the fact that these refinements and graces were not being reproduced in painting or sculpture.

It is true that there are no remains of the work of Rhoikos by which we can judge of his genius; but the heavy and rather lifeless figure of Aiakes here reproduced is typical of the sculpture of this period and region, and the ponderous figures from Branchidæ, on the mainland nearby, now in the British Museum, are well-known examples of it. The statues found in recent years in Athens, though in some cases charming and graceful, are definitely primitive, definitely representative of a stage in the development of the art of sculpture. Rhoikos, however, was not only a sculptor; he was also an architect, and it was he who made the plans for the temple of Hera, the work being begun by him and carried on after his death by his sons, Theodoros and Telekles. Architecture was more advanced than sculpture, and this temple and the other buildings of Samos were no longer archaic in style, but, on the contrary, were fully worthy of this age of culture in which they were erected.

These two brothers must have been hard at work at the time with which we are now dealing, and if Sappho visited the island she must assuredly have made their acquaintance. Theodoros was the better artist of the two, and was equally famous as a worker in bronze, stone, and wood. As a young man he had helped his father in the construction of a labyrinth on the island of Lemnos, north of Lesbos, and later, at Ephesus, he had prepared the plans and laid the foundations of the temple of Artemis (Diana of the Ephesians). He was now working with his brother upon a great wooden statue of Apollo, and in his spare time was writing a book about

the temple of Hera which he had helped to build. His brother's son, Theodoros the younger, was at this time a promising young man, who afterwards attained great fame as a sculptor, vase-maker, and engraver of gems; but he did not become head of the firm of Rhoikos until some fifteen years later.

Another Samian of this period, whom Sappho may have known, was Mnesarchos, an engraver of gems;[11] but this personage shines only in the glory of his son, who was, it would seem, no more than an infant at this time—the great philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras, the propounder of the theory of reincarnation and also of that of celestial harmony and "the music of the spheres." The date of his birth is doubtful, but it is usually assigned to the period between 586 and 582 B. C.

Polykrates, the afterwards famous Tyrant of Samos, was also only a child at this time, for he established his tyranny in 536 or 535 B. C. and died in 515 B. C.; but his father Aiakes, a wealthy merchant whose statue we have already noticed,[12] may well have been known to Sappho, for he appears to have been one of the leading citizens of the time.

For us, however, the most important personage whom Sappho may have met was a certain rich merchant of Samos named Iadmon, son of Hephæstopolis.[13] In this man's possession there were two slaves who both attained celebrity, and thereby gave immortality to their owner. The one was Æsop, the famous author of the fables, and the other Doricha-Rhodopis, who afterwards became Sappho's sister-in-law.

Of Æsop, or Aisōpos, as he was really called, very little is

[11] Diogenes Laertius, viii, 1.

[12] The identification of the statue is discussed in *Athenische Mitteilungen*, xxxi (1906), p. 151 ff.

[13] Herodotus, ii, 134.

known. He is generally thought to have been born about 620 B. C., and hence would have been a man of some forty years of age at this time. There was a strong tradition in antiquity that he was ugly and deformed, and he is so represented in a statue in the Villa Albani in Rome; while Maximus Planudes, a monk of the fourteenth century A. D. who collected his fables into a book prefaced by a more or less fictitious biography, describes him as a monster of hideousness. But there is earlier mention of a statue of him by Lysippos in which his figure appears to have been normal and dignified; and Plutarch in his *Banquet of the Sages,* though recording jokes at his expense, makes no mention of anything peculiar about his appearance.

It must have been at about this time that Æsop received his freedom from Iadmon, doubtless in recognition of his abilities as a story-teller and orator; for Aristotle [14] mentions the fact that he, Æsop, conducted the public defense of a Samian politician of the popular party, a task which he could not have undertaken had he remained a slave as Herodotus [15] describes him. Diogenes Laertius, in his life of Chilon, says that Æsop was at the height of his fame in the Fifty-second Olympiad, 572 B. C.; and he was evidently then a free man, for he went over to stay at the Lydian court at Sardis and there became the friend of Solon and other celebrated guests of the King of Lydia. It is improbable that he ever committed his fables to writing, for no such work is mentioned, and, in fact, Aristophanes [16] distinctly refers to these tales having been passed orally from one person to another; and one must imagine him, therefore, as a fluent and amusing speaker, always ready to entertain his or Iadmon's friends with his witty, rambling talks about men and

[14] Aristotle: *Rhetoric,* ii, 20.
[15] Herodotus, ii, 134.
[16] Aristophanes: *Wasps,* 1259.

morals, illustrating his remarks by these fables and making everybody laugh. He was evidently very good company, and was as wise as he was amusing, for it is said that in after years he was a guest at dinner-parties at which Solon of Athens and other great men of the time were present; and, by the same token, it is probable that he was called upon to entertain Sappho—that is to say, if we are entitled to picture her at this time as an honored visitor at the houses of some of the rich families of Samos.

Rhodopis "the Rose-like," is described by Herodotus [17] as Æsop's fellow-slave in the household of Iadmon. She was a charming, fair-complexioned and apparently fair-haired girl, by birth a native of Thrace, whose beauty was so exceptional that in after years it brought her almost world-wide fame. Her real name was Doricha, as Strabo states,[18] and at a later date Sappho speaks of her under that name; but the perfection of her beauty earned for her her comparison to the rose. At about this time her owner, Iadmon, seems to have been considering her sale to a certain Xanthes, a Samian merchant, who proposed to take her across to Naukratis, the headquarters of the Greek mercenary troops in Egypt, and to let her out there as a courtesan; [19] but it was not until some years later, it would seem, that the execution of this project brought the girl to the notice of Sappho's brother during a visit he was making to Naukratis, and thereby caused a domestic storm of which we shall presently read. For the moment this lovely creature makes but a brief appearance in our story, brought thus early into it by her connection with Samos; and it is not likely that Sappho was yet aware of her existence, though in view of the propensities of the poetess it is possible that a chance ac-

[17] Herodotus, ii, 134.
[18] Strabo, xvii, 808; but see Athenæus, xiii, 69.
[19] Herodotus, ii, 135.

quaintanceship between them had been effected which afterwards added the sting of familiarity to Sappho's jealous anger against her.

It may have been in reference to the return journey from Samos to Lesbos that Sappho wrote the poem of which the following fragment, tentatively restored, has survived:[20]

> "When the storms roar, the sailors, frightened by the mighty blasts of the wind, throw their cargo overboard and run their ship aground on the beach. But as for me, in my journey hence, I certainly pray that I may not be storm-tossed, nor, with fear at my heart, wish to throw my cargo far worthless into the waves; yet if it should be to Nereus in his flowing pageant of the sea to receive that cargo. . . ."[21]

The rest is lost.

[20] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1931, 9, restored by Edmonds.

[21] The word "pageant" is *pompē*. Nereus was the god of the Ægean.

Chapter Twelve

THE IONIAN CONFEDERACY

SAMOS, as I have already said, was one of the chief cities of the Ionian Confederacy, that league of the thirteen most important Ionian-Greek colonies along the western shores of Asia Minor and on the islands off the coast—the thorn in the side of Lydia. These cities, taken in geographical order from north to south, were; Phokæa, Smyrna (originally belonging to the Æolian League), Klazomenæ, Chios, Erythræ, Teos, Lebedos, Kolophon, Ephesus, Samos, Priene, Myos, and Miletus.

Phokæa, the northernmost of these colonies, must have been well known to Sappho. It was from the early days of its history a maritime power of importance, and the city possessed two excellent harbors from which there was a constant stream of traffic to Mitylene, thirty miles across the water. It was only about fifteen miles northwest of the river Hermus, and was a terminus of the Royal Highroad which passed along that valley from the coast of Sardis and thence to the Orient; and its merchandise, gathered in far seas, was carried by this route eastwards to distant lands. The Æolian city of Kyme, where the son of Pittakos met his death, was ten miles to the east; and, indeed, the early Ionian settlers were at first obliged to beg their territory from these Æolians, but soon outdistanced them in prosperity. The Phokæans, in fact, were an extremely enterprising and adventurous people; and not long after the birth of Sappho they established a trading base and colony on the far away

coast of Gaul, which they named Massalia and which is now the great port of southern France, Marseilles.

Smyrna, about thirty miles to the south as the crow flies, must assuredly have been visited by Sappho, for it was reputed to be the birthplace of Homer—an honor, however, disputed by six other cities, of which Chios and Kolophon had the best justification for the rival claim. Originally Smyrna was a member of the Æolian league, and, in fact, was the center at which the Pan-Æolian convention was held; but for a century now it had been one of the Ionian confederates, and in spite of its conquest, firstly by the people of Kolophon, and secondly by King Alyattes of Lydia, and its consequent position of semi-vassalage to Sardis, it was at this time practically a self-governing city-state imbued with that spirit of enterprise which characterized the Ionian colonies. It stood near the mouth of the little river Meles, at the head of the long, narrow Gulf of Smyrna, where the sea was calm and often mirror-like, being protected from the winds by the surrounding mountains; and, like Phokæa, it was a terminus of the Royal Highroad to the East. It was a beautiful city, backed by the richly cultivated slopes of the Tmolus mountains, and facing Mount Sipylos across the Gulf; and the shipping which lay in deep waters close under its walls seemed always to be snug and safe here from the attacks of man or the elements.

The houses rose as it were in terraces from the low-lying ground near the sea to the heights behind, and in the afternoons the sun beat full upon them, so that in approaching by ship the whole city was reflected in the still water in an immense, inverted picture, vividly colored and astonishing to the eye. The early acropolis, of which the ruins are still to be seen, was perched on an overhanging peak, nearly thirteen hundred feet above the level of the sea; and looking down from this commanding height one could see the jum-

ble of buildings and maze of lanes spread out over a wide area, but bisected by certain straight, new streets, of which the most conspicuous was that called The Golden, running from east to west more or less parallel with the shoreline.

Near the sea, to the east of the city, was the great temple of Cybele, the mother-goddess, who was here worshiped under the name of Mētēr Sipylene, after her ancient shrine on Mount Sipylos; and not far away was the temple of Nemesis, divine daughter of Night, who measured out happiness and sorrow to mankind through the medium of Conscience, and ultimately, by reason of the great preponderance of the guilty consciences over the clear, came to be regarded simply as man's avenging fate. On the banks of the Meles there was a temple to the nymph Smyrna, the titulary deity of the place, who, according to one legend, was the mother of Adonis. By a prank of Aphrodite, it was said, she had conceived an unnatural love for her own father, and by night had come to his room in disguise; but later, when the deception was discovered, she had fled before his wrath, had been changed by the pitying gods into a tree, and in that guise, nine months later, had given birth to Adonis by the simple expedient of bursting.

At another spot on the banks of the river there was a cave which was shown to visitors as a once favorite haunt of Homer, who was said to have written much of his poetry there. It was at Smyrna, too, that the melancholy Ionian poet Mimnermos lived, who was at the height of his fame when Sappho was a child, and whose love-poetry must often have been read by her.[1] The date of his death is not known, but it is not inconceivable that Sappho came here to see him when he was an old man, and condoled with him upon the miseries of old age, upon which subject he had written so often and so sorrowfully.

[1] See Chapter Three.

Klazomenæ stood on the shore of the Gulf, a few miles east of Smyrna, but at this time it was of no great importance; and, indeed, in after years it was chiefly famous as the birthplace of the Ionian philosopher Anaxagoras, who was born there about half a century after Sappho's death.

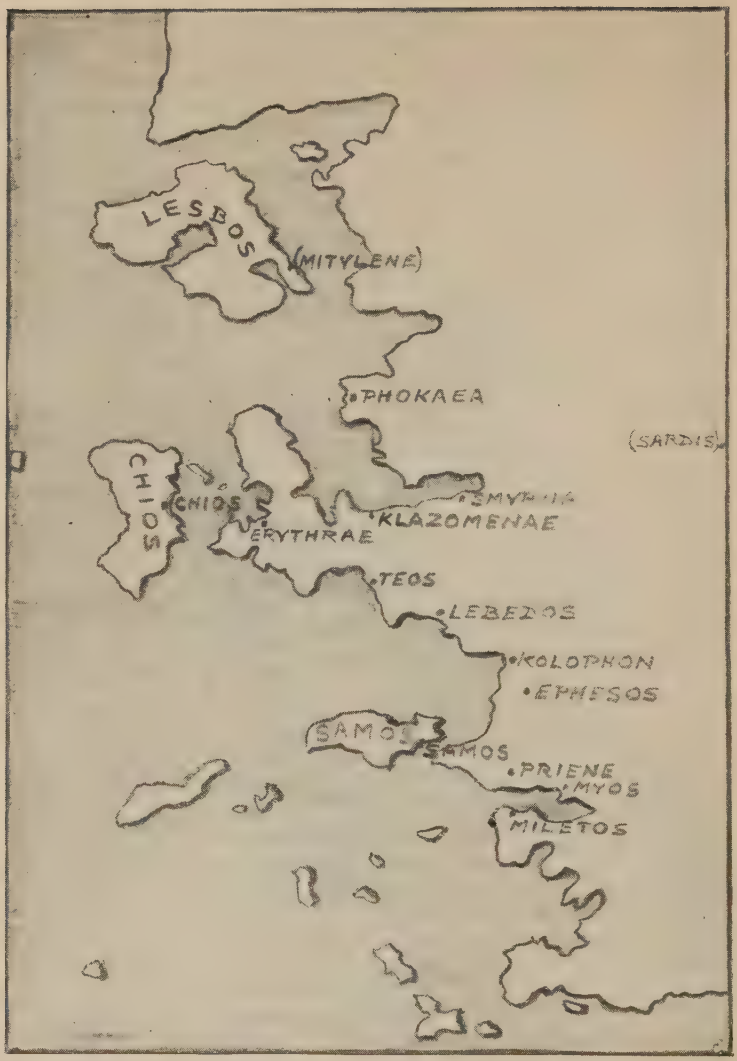
The city of Chios stood on the east side of the island of the same name, being about sixty miles southwest of Mitylene, and the same distance west of Smyrna. The island, which is some thirty miles long from north to south, is perhaps the most beautiful in the Ægean; and in spite of the fact that it is covered with rocky mountains the soil is so fertile that from early times the place was famous for its vines, its figs, and its general wealth of fruit and flowers. In the more stony areas there were plantations of lentisk-trees which supplied the countries far and near with the resinous gum known as mastic; and down by the sea there were olive-groves and orchards. Chian wine was famous, and was of various kinds, both sweet and dry, while a particularly dark-colored variety was noted for its potency.[2] The people of this island, in fact, were thought to know more about the cultivation of grapes and the making of wine than any others in the Greek world.

Chios itself was a very splendid city, and its natural setting on the foothills of the lofty Pelinæon mountain was so beautiful that it was regarded in antiquity as a sort of paradise on earth. The stretch of water which separated the island from the mainland was eight miles wide at its narrowest, but the whole expanse of the visible sea was dotted with islands and encompassed by hills, so that it was like an inland lake spread out in blue and green and purple before the windows of the houses, there being no open sea-horizon in view, but everywhere mountains distant or near, some shelving down into the water in steep slopes, others descending

[2] Athenæus, i, 47.

British Museum

A TERRACOTTA PLAQUE OF THE SIXTH CENTURY B.C., REPRESENTING SAPPHO AND ALKAIOS, FROM THE ISLAND OF MELOS



A SKETCH-MAP OF THE CITIES OF THE IONIAN CONFEDERACY

in dizzy precipices or tremendous headlands of rock gashed with deep chasms. To the south of the city was a wide plain filled with trees—the olive, almond, fig, and pomegranate predominating; and to the north were masses of granite rocks, amidst which was an ancient shrine of Cybele, while high up in the mountains was a temple of Zeus Pelinaios.

The beauty of the women of Chios was notorious, and their chastity proverbial, the latter fact being remarkable in view of the equally notorious reputation of the Chians for luxury and self-indulgence. They are said to have been the first people amongst the Greeks to buy foreign slaves in the barbarian markets [3] to supplement those of ancient servile origin born and bred in their midst, or those acquired by capture in war; and in this connection a story worth repeating is told by Nymphodoros of Syracuse, a traveler and historian who lived in the reign of Alexander the Great.[4]

He says that in the old days—which, as likely as not, may have been those of the time of Sappho—there lived, so he had been told, a slave named Drimakos who, having run away from his master, gathered a great force of fugitive slaves in the mountains, and lived there for many years as a kind of robber-chieftain, defeating the soldiers sent against him from time to time, and gradually building up for himself an immense reputation of the Robin Hood sort. At length he sent a message to the citizens of Chios, promising that if they would leave him in peace he would steal from them no more goods than he and his men actually required, would measure and record all the grain thus taken, and would place his seal upon all barns and stores robbed by him, so that the owners might know by whom the theft had been committed and might be able to distinguish these recognized appropriations from the ordinary pilferings and

[3] Athenæus, vi, 88.
[4] Quoted by Athenæus, vi, 88–90.

burglaries to which they were liable. He offered to institute, in fact, what is called to-day a racket, that is to say, the levying of a sort of tribute as the price of exemption from violence.

He promised, furthermore, to try the case of every runaway slave who should seek sanctuary with him, retaining those who seemed to have just cause for their flight, and sending back to their masters those who should prove to have made off without having suffered any definite wrongs.

To these terms the citizens agreed; and, as a result, there were far fewer desertions of slaves than there had formerly been, for all knew the implacable justice of Drimakos and were aware that there was no refuge for them unless the conditions from which they fled were really intolerable. Moreover, life in the stronghold of this outlaw was by no means a bed of roses: Drimakos was a stern ruler who punished the refractory with great severity, and permitted nobody to commit any sort of lawless act without his approval. He was a man punctilious in matters of religion, and on the eve of all holy days his followers regularly took from the farms such animals and fruits as were necessary for sacrifice to the gods, and such wine as was best fitted for the sacred libations; nor did he ever behave with violence to any citizens except those who were attempting to overthrow his power.

At length when he had grown old and was tired of life he decided to allow his favorite followers to claim the large reward and the freedom which had been offered for his head; and he therefore voluntarily submitted to decapitation, his severed head being then taken to Chios, where the price for it was duly paid. A shrine was afterwards erected at his grave in the mountains, and there, under the name of the Gentle Hero, his spirit was worshiped during the centuries which followed. He would often appear in dreams to

the citizens and the slaves of Chios, warning the former of any plots against them and advising the latter as to their behavior under oppression; and still, says Nymphodoros, even in his own day, every runaway slave attempted to visit this shrine and to place there upon the altar some part of the first scraps of food he had managed to purloin.

In the time of Sappho the people of Chios, like the far-off Sybarites, were in close mercantile alliance with Miletus, of which city I shall presently speak; and from this source they obtained most of the luxuries for which they were famous—those same luxuries which graced the houses of the rich men of Sybaris. The Chians, in fact, were almost as notorious as the Sybarites for their elegant life; and their cooks were said to have been extremely clever in the preparation of rich dishes.[5] They were an artistic people, and a school of sculpture which rivaled that of Samos was early established on the island; and from it seem to have come some of the archaic statues found on the acropolis at Athens. In Sappho's day, or not long before her time, a famous metal-worker of Chios, named Glaukos, discovered the process of welding iron; and a silver basin resting upon a stand of iron made by him was presented to Delphi by King Alyattes of Lydia.[6]

The cities of Erythræ, Teos, and Lebedos were not of so much importance, but Kolophon, a little further to the south, was a powerful state, and in spite of its unsuccessful resistance to the Lydian invasions, its maritime power was considerable and its wealth correspondingly great. One of Sappho's favorite *hetæræ,* a girl named Gongyla, of whom we shall read in a later chapter, was a native of Kolophon. Mimnermos, who lived and worked at Smyrna, was born here; but its most famous scion in early times—setting aside

[5] Athenæus, i, 46.
[6] Pausanias, x, 16.

its claim to Homer—was the philosopher Xenophanes who was, however, only a child at the time of Sappho's death, and therefore does not come into this story.

The city was situated on the river Hales, and was about fifteen miles north of Ephesus; but little is to be learnt of its topography from ancient writers, and the site is now more or less lost under cultivated fields. I may mention, however, that at Klaros, a seacoast suburb east of Kolophon, there was a celebrated oracle of Apollo; and in this neighborhood were the docks and the temple of Poseidon. Curiously enough the name of the city is now best known to us in our word "colophon," an inscription at the end of a book, this word being derived from the Greek *kolophon* meaning "a finishing-touch," which, again, was derived from the name of the city, the fact being that in the Lydian wars the cavalry of Kolophon became famous as a means of giving the finishing touch to a defeated enemy force, and hence "to *kolophon*" anything came to signify the adding of the last stroke.[7]

Several ancient writers [8] speak of the luxury of the Kolophonians; and Xenophanes, writing not long after Sappho's death, says that they had become extremely effeminate and self-indulgent owing to their contact with the soft, pleasure-loving Lydians, and that the smart young men were wont to dress in purple—a dye which was worth its weight in silver—and to wear golden ornaments in their expensively scented hair. So usual was it for them to drink themselves into a state of coma at the evening meals that all musicians and singers were paid only until nightfall, after which there were no ears capable of listening to them. Theopompos of Chios, writing in the fourth century B. C., adds that in his time there were at least a thousand fops in the city who were

[7] Strabo, xiv, i, 28.
[8] Quoted by Athenæus, xii, 31.

to be seen wandering about in purple gowns, although that color, owing to its costliness, was rarely used elsewhere even at royal courts. The dye was obtained from certain shell-fish, the *purpura,* and the *murex,* and was chiefly sold by the merchants of Tyre, on the coast of Syria.

South of Kolophon stood the city of Ephesos, or Ephesus, as the Romans wrote it, on the slope of the hills near the mouth of the river Caystrus (Kaystros), already in Sappho's time famous as a great center of the worship of Artemis, the goddess who is better known to us as Diana of the Ephesians.[9] Her sacred precinct, the Artemision, was situated about a mile northeast of the city, in a low-lying plain near a lake and not far back from the sea, this somewhat marshy site having been chosen by Theodoros of Samos, who, so it is said, deemed the ground here less liable to be shaken by earthquakes, and who prepared a shock-absorbing foundation for the buildings by laying down a bed of charcoal and fleeces beneath the stonework.[10] As a matter of fact the goddess was traditionally associated with marshes, lakes and rivers, and is sometimes called *Despoina Limnēs,* "Lady of the Lake," or *Eleia,* "She of the Marshes"; and this site may therefore have been sacred to her from time immemorial.

The Ephesian Artemis—or Diana, as the Romans called her—was not quite the same as the goddess of that name worshiped in Greece. In Greek mythology she was the daughter of Zeus and twin-sister and counterpart of Apollo; and just as Apollo was the perfect youth, the model of clean, adolescent manhood, the ideal bridegroom, so Artemis was the perfect maiden, strong, athletic, graceful, pure and virginal, the perfect bride-to-be and future mother of men, who regarded the passion of love as the means and not the end of existence, and was almost indifferent to Aphrodite.

[9] In the Bible, *Acts,* ch. xix.
[10] Piny: *Natural History,* v, 31; xxxvi, 14.

As the incarnation of the spirit of primal nature, she roamed the woods, at once the huntress and the protectress of wild animals. Boars and bears were sacred to her, and in prehistoric times she was evidently a sort of Queen of the Wild Animals, to whom a young girl was annually sacrificed by the tribe; for in historic times a goat or a fawn was in some districts dressed up as a human girl and thus sacrificed—a milder relic of primitive savagery. In certain cities, the girls were consecrated to Artemis before marriage, and were then termed "bears," as though the goddess were a sort of Queen Bear, and the girls her little cubs.[11]

The Artemis of Ephesus, however, was a divinity more conscious of sex, and more maternal: so much so, in fact, that in later times her figure was represented as that of a woman having many breasts, like the females amongst the hunting-dogs or those of the boars which were sacred to her. Yet here at Ephesus, too, she was virginal, and her motherhood was of that chaste, immaculate kind with which we have become familiar in the theological representation of the Virgin Mary. As a matter of fact, there is a great deal of the Ephesian Artemis in the Christian conception of Mary as "Queen of Heaven"; for in the year 431 A. D. Cyril of Alexandria, in a sermon preached at Ephesus, consciously blended the old worship with the new, and applied to the virgin-mother of Jesus much of the unforgotten character of Diana of the Ephesians. Mary's identification with the goddess in the popular fancy led at length to the belief that she had ultimately come to live in Ephesus; and in the end the annual festival of the goddess, which took place at mid-August when the summer moon was full, became the Christian Feast of the Assumption—the ascension of Mary into heaven—the annual date of which is August 15th.

[11] Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Lysistrata,* 646.

The first shrine of Artemis at Ephesus was said to have been built by Amazons,[12] in which statement we are probably to see a reference to her celibate priestesses; and she was also served by eunuch priests.[13] Her greatest festival, the Ephesia or Artemisia, was celebrated in the spring, and lasted three days; and to it came the Ionians from all the cities round about to join in the general merrymaking.

Somewhere about the year 600 B. C., when Sappho was a child, a certain Pythagoras had overthrown the old aristocratic government, and had established himself as Tyrant of Ephesus; but at the time with which we are now dealing his successor, Melas, was ruling the city, and had cemented an alliance with the Lydians by marrying a daughter of King Alyattes of Lydia. Lydian influence, in fact, was pronounced in Ephesus, and there was a constant traffic between it and Sardis, the Lydian capital, which was not much more than fifty miles distant; but this, of course, is to be said also of the other Ionian cities along this coast, and the fact that Ionian civilization became notorious for its luxury and soft-living is undoubtedly due to its reception of Lydian and Oriental ideas.

The city of Priene, south of Ephesus, held an important position in the Ionian confederacy because of its closeness to the promontory of Mykale—the headland opposite Samos—where the annual Pan-Ionian convention was held. This convention met on the slopes of Mount Mykale, a few miles to the northwest of Priene; and here, overlooking the sea, stood the temple of Poseidon, the national god, at whose altar great sacrifices were then made, these rites being supervised by a chief priest who had always to be a citizen of Priene. In the time of Sappho the city stood on the seacoast,

[12] Pausanias, vii, 2, 4; etc.
[13] Strabo, xiv, 1, 23.

a short distance north of the mouth of the Mæander; but the deposits from this river ultimately filled up its harbor, and the site is now some miles inland.

The most famous citizen of Priene in early times was Bias, a caustic, rough-spoken, sardonic personage, regarded afterwards as one of the Seven Wise Men, who was Sappho's contemporary, though he appears to have been some years her senior, and in the end outlived her. At somewhere about the date with which we are now dealing the Lydians came to blows with Priene, and besieged the city under the leadership of King Alyattes, whose grandfather, King Ardys, had done the same. Bias was at this time one of the leading citizens, and he is said [14] to have been instrumental in causing the siege to be abandoned, having played a trick upon Alyattes which had the effect of disheartening him in his efforts to starve the place into surrender. Bias fattened up two or three mules until they were nearly bursting, and allowed them to be captured by the Lydians, who thus thought that the people of Priene must still have food and to spare; and afterwards he caused great mounds of sand to be heaped up in the granaries, and having covered their surfaces with grain, he showed them casually to certain Lydian envoys who had come through the lines upon some business or other, with the result that they carried back to the camp of Alyattes a story of the inexhaustible supplies of the city. Later, when peace was restored, Alyattes sent a messenger to Bias, inviting him to visit Sardis; but Bias, suspecting the King's motives and not desiring his friendship, replied with a derisive grimace. "O, go and tell Alyattes to eat onions!" he said, which, as Diogenes Laertius explains, was a vulgar way of telling him to go and shed some sham tears, since his invitation was certainly not going to be accepted.

I shall have more to say of Bias later; but meanwhile we

[14] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Bias.*

must pass on through the next city, Myos, a place of little importance, to Miletus, or Miletos, the southernmost state in the confederacy, to which reference has already been made more than once. It was the native city of Anaktoria, one of Sappho's *hetæræ,* it will be recalled; [15] and in connection with Periander of Corinth we have read of its Tyrant, Thrasybulos, who so delicately gave his friend the advice that he should lop off the heads of all the important Corinthians.[16] It will be remembered, too,[17] that it was with Miletus that the Sybarites conducted their main trade; and, as I mentioned just now, the people of Chios were also in close mercantile connection with the Milesians.

The city, which was the pride of Ionia, was built on high ground upon a promontory forming the south side of a deep inlet of the sea, on the northern shore of which was Priene with the mouth of the Mæander nearby. The acropolis stood upon a rocky bluff immediately overlooking the sea; and from its almost impregnable battlements one could look northwards across the water to the hills around Ephesus, some thirty miles away, backed by the distant Tmolus mountains, while northwestwards the hills of Samos, also about thirty miles distant, could be seen, and due westwards groups of far-off islands lay upon the sea's horizon. The city had four distinct harbors, protected by small islands, but to-day these harbors are silted up, and, indeed, the entire inlet upon which Miletus stood is now dry land. Being so near the mouth of the Mæander, it was a natural outlet for the trade of Phrygia and central Asia Minor; and its chief industry was the making of woolen goods, the raw material coming down to its busy factories from the rich pasturelands of the interior. A little south of

[15] Chapter Ten.
[16] Chapter Four.
[17] Chapter Seven.

the city was the famous oracle of Branchidæ, whose seat was the temple of Apollo Didymæus, the ruins of which have been excavated in modern times.

In the days of Sappho, Miletus was already one of the greatest maritime powers of the Greek world, and was the mother of no less than sixty colonies or trading-stations, many of which were upon the shores of the Black Sea, the trade of that area being its monopoly. Unfortunately, little is known of the appearance of the city at this time, and the modern excavations, while having uncovered many buildings of later date, have revealed only a temple of Athena which can be dated to Sappho's age; but at any rate we know that the place was already considered to be one of the richest, the most splendid, and the most luxurious centers of Greek culture. The refinement of its life is exemplified in a fragment of Euboulos,[18] an Athenian playwright of the fourth century B. C., who describes a certain well-mannered courtesan in these words: "She is not like the others who at dinner make great balls of leeks and stuff their cheeks with them, or loudly chew with their teeth large lumps of greasy meat: *she* delicately tastes each dish in small morsels, like a lady of Miletus." The soft-living of the citizens, in fact, is said to have emasculated the race; and at length there passed into circulation the bitter proverb, "Once upon a time Milesians were brave." [19]

Certainly they put up a good fight against the Lydians who were at war with them at the beginning of the reign of Alyattes, and a peace based on mutual respect, was afterwards established between the two peoples. That, however, was during the strong rule of Thrasybulos; but after his death the city was distracted by factional fights between the *Ploutis* and the *Cheiromache*—words which may perhaps

[18] Athenæus, xiii, 29.
[19] Athenæus, xii, 26.

mean Capital and Labor,[20] and although Plutarch [21] mentions two other Tyrants, Thoas and Damasenor, who may have been ruling in Sappho's day, there seem to have been long periods during which the city was in a state of frequent disturbance.

Nevertheless Miletus was at this time an art-center and the home of the earlier school of Ionian philosophy. Thales, a native of this city of whom I shall speak more fully in a subsequent chapter, was an astronomer who was the first also of the great Greek philosophers: he was born some years before Sappho, but outlived her, and came to be regarded as one of the Seven Wise Men, the epitaph on his monument reading: "Miletus, fairest of Ionian cities, gave birth to the great astronomer Thales, in all kinds of knowledge the wisest of mortals." [22] His pupil, another Milesian, named Anaximander, was born at just about the time when Sappho first saw the light, for he is stated to have been sixty-four in the second year of the 58th Olympiad, 547 B. C.[23] Though not so great as his master, he attained considerable fame; and to him is ascribed the invention of the gnomon, while it is said that he was the first to make a map of the known world, and the first, also, to discover that the light of the moon was borrowed from the sun. He recognized the earth to be a sphere, but regarded it as the center of the universe, and thought the sun was of about the same size. He said that the primary element in all things was the indefinable Infinite, of which the parts were susceptible of change but the whole unchangeable.

Such, then, were the cities of the Ionian confederacy, with all of which Sappho was probably familiar, as, of course,

[20] As suggested by P. N. Ure: *Origin of Tyranny,* p. 269.
[21] Plutarch: *Moralia,* 298.
[22] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Thales.*
[23] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Anaximander.*

she must also have been with those of the Æolian confederacy in which Mitylene was included. But these Æolian cities do not call for individual description, for, with the exception of Kyme, they were not of great importance, and even Kyme was overshadowed by its Ionian neighbor, Phokæa. Though herself an Æolian, Sappho seems to have felt in some ways a greater kinship with the Ionians, for it was they who were leading the Ægean at this time in that elegance of life which she so greatly loved.

Chapter Thirteen

SAPPHO'S REPUTATION AND STANDING IN LESBOS

I HAVE already ventured the opinion that Sappho's great reputation both as a brilliant poetess and as a supreme exponent of the art of living exquisitely was largely acquired during the first phases of her career, that is to say in her twenties and early thirties, my argument being that girls were already coming to her from foreign countries at a time when she could speak of being herself still youthful. Some centuries after her day, as we shall see later, her character was attacked, her memory becoming in the end the butt of occasional light jests; and a question which has to be answered is as to whether or not these aspersions were going the rounds of social gossip in Lesbos and hurting her reputation during that period of her life with which we are now dealing.

There are two pieces of evidence which may perhaps indicate that though there were scandals about her at this time, she managed to survive them without loss of prestige. Firstly, Suidas says that the imputations against her moral character were "slanderous," by which he seems to mean that the later attacks upon her memory were not supported by contemporary evidence; and secondly, Ovid [1] writes: "What did Sappho teach us except how to love our sweethearts?"—*amare puellas*—"yet Sappho was safe"—*tuta tamen Sappho;* which perhaps means that he knew of nothing to suggest that her reputation in her own day was ever

[1] Ovid: *Tristia,* ii, 365.

seriously endangered, although elsewhere he makes her say in regard to the girls of Lesbos, ". . . whom I have loved, not without accusation"—*quas non sine crimine amavi,* and "whose love has made me of ill-report"—*infamen quæ me fecistis amore.*[2]

In her own poems there are indications that she *was* being unpleasantly talked about in Lesbos at this period of her youthful fame. There is part of a letter to an unknown person written by her in verse,[3] which seems to read:

> ". . . If you frequent the society of the notable rather than the good and upright, and tell your [true] friends to go away, and hurt me by saying in your inflated conceit that I am become a reproach to you, you may do so to your heart's content. Have your fill of it!—even though, on my part, my mind is not disposed to take mildly the bad temper of youth. At any rate, do not doubt this: the trap never catches the older birds. I know what was the extent of your treachery on a former occasion, and the kind of thing I have to contend with; and therefore it were better for you to be careful, and to mend your ways, for I am sure that, being easy-going, I have the powers that be [4] on my side."

The fact that the person whom she was here censuring regarded her as a reproach to him indicates that he was a close relation, while her reference to his youthful anger shows that he was then still young; and therefore it would seem probable that the letter was addressed to her youngest brother, Larichos, in which case it must have been written

[2] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv, 19 and 201.

[3] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* 5, P. 5006 verso; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 424, restored by Edmonds and others.

[4] The word is *makares,* which can mean either the "blessed ones," i.e. the gods, or the "prosperous," i.e. people of standing.

when he was not more than twenty-two or twenty-three years of age and Sappho therefore about twenty-eight or twenty-nine. It is true that a note about her by a writer of the second or third century A. D.[5] states that "she was more attached to Larichos, her youngest brother" than to the others; but, even so, she may have had this exchange of blows with him. The important point, however, is that there was evidently some sort of adverse talk about her which seems to have estranged her from some member of her family.

One can well imagine the scandal being fomented by Andromeda, the head-mistress of the academy to which Atthis had gone; for Atthis would have been but human in justifying herself for her secession by saying that Sappho's attentions were disagreeable to her. Moreover, Sappho's attitude, as deduced from her poems, is rather that of one who wished to defend herself, if only by defiance; for she published in poetic form the story of her love for Atthis, and, by quoting the girl's letters to her, as we have already seen, stressed the fact that it was both mutual and charming. The publication, too, of her correspondence with Anaktoria may have had the indirect purpose of revealing the love between Anaktoria and Atthis to which she, Sappho, was only the third party.

Then again, Sappho insists in a very marked way in describing her relations to her *hetæræ* as being pure and beautiful—a fact which suggests that there were those who did not think so. In the poem [6] to the goddess Hera she prays that she "may do again, as of old, things pure and beautiful amongst the maidens of Mitylene." In another fragment of a poem,[7] to which I will refer again later, she says that her

[5] *Oxrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, 1, 1. See also Athenæus, x, 24.
[6] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, i, ii B.
[7] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 13.

girls will always remember their life with her in the splendor of youth, and the many things they then did together both pure and beautiful. And we have already noticed her words to Atthis: "Let me remind you of what you have forgotten—how fond and beautiful was the life we led together."

In later times, however, she was accused not so much of impropriety in connection with her *hetæræ* as of loose behavior with men; and as has already been explained in the first chapter of this book there was so strong a tradition that she was an out-and-out courtesan that her literary admirers were driven to suppose the existence of another Sappho who was a prostitute. We can hardly avoid the conclusion, therefore, that her standard of morals was not that of the stricter elements of Greek society; but, on the other hand, the fact that so many girls were placed in her care, or were at any rate allowed to frequent her house, is good proof that her delinquencies were more or less successfully concealed or were not taken very seriously at this time by the leaders of the social life of Mitylene. Her position, it seems to me, was defended, in fact, by that triple rampart which has served also in other cases to defeat the assault of the bewildered moralist—she was a genius, she was well-born and wealthy, and she was a woman of exquisite taste and refinement.

Her genius need not be argued: it is attested by all critics, ancient and modern, and is apparent even in the thin shadow of her work which translation provides. There is real magic, for example, in the lines which refer to Anaktoria in Sardis: "Ah, then she calls aloud to us to come to her, and of what she says we are not ignorant, you and I, for leafy Night of the many sounds speaks it to us through the space between." I would instance, too, her phrase: "I render your beauty the sacrifice of all my thoughts, and

worship you with all my senses"; or, again, her picture of a maiden "like the sweet apple that reddens on the end of the bough, the very end of the bough, which the gatherers missed, nay, missed not, but could not reach so far away." None but a genius could have written that haunting description of a garden where "by the cool waterside the breeze rustles through the apple-branches, and from the shaken leaves sleep floats down"; and there is the authentic touch in the words ". . . nor ever did the gathering sounds of early spring fill any wood with the chorus of the nightingales but you wandered thither with me." The authentic touch, indeed, is frequently to be found in the meager fragments of her poetry left to us; and her lost work must have even more conclusively proved her genius, since antiquity regarded her as no less than a tenth Muse.

As to her wealth, it is to be inferred from stray references, and is attested by the known fact of her marriage to a very rich man; while her blue blood is indicated by her close association with the aristocratic party in Lesbian politics, and by the fact that her brother held the socially exclusive office of cup-bearer in Mitylene.

The refinement of her life remains to be argued from the surviving fragments of her verse, and these, indeed, supply full evidence of that cultured elegance already observed in the general circumstances of her career. Her immaculate, and even scholarly, use of words in expressing her burning passions, the perfect poise of her wildest phrases, and the faultless rhythm to which she sets her tumultuous thoughts, reveal the fastidious taste and the mastery of technique which were both in command and at the service of her heart's eloquence; and these qualities of restraint betoken, one may well believe, a nature of the highest refinement, although, it is true, she herself has said,

"Love can make a poet out of a boor." [8]

Lucian [9] speaks of the "fastidiousness of her discrimination," and an introductory epigram to an ancient selection of quotations [10] refers to "the flowers of Sappho, few, but roses,"—the rose being regarded as the perfect flower. Catullus knows of no higher praise for a certain young woman than that of calling her *doctior,* "more cultured," than Sappho; [11] and Dionysius of Halicarnassus cites her work as one of the leading instances of perfect artistry and technique.[12]

Her fine appreciation of the beauties of nature—not mere emotional awe or enjoyment of them, but fine, sensitive, thoughtful, discerning appreciation—is also indicative of the delicate structure of her mind. "Sappho loves the rose," wrote Philostratus,[13] "and always crowns it with the reward of her song of praise, likening the beauty of maidens to it; and she compares the bared arms of the Graces to roses"—that is, to the smooth, graceful, sweet-scented, white rose-petals, translucent and without weight. In her letter to Atthis regarding Anaktoria she speaks of the dew-sprinkled roses lifting themselves up in the moonlight, and of the field-flowers then opening their petals; in the fragments of her poetry which remain to us, she tells of

"golden chick-pea growing on the seashore"; [14]

[8] Plutarch: *Symposium,* i, 5, 1.
[9] Lucian: *Portraits,* xviii.
[10] *Palatine Anthology,* iv, 1.
[11] Catullus, xxxv, 16.
[12] Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Demosthenes,* 40.
[13] Philostratus: *Epistolæ,* 51.
[14] Athenæus, ii, 44. The species is *erebinthos,* "chick-pea" or "vetch."

she writes of

"the hyacinth's brightness blinding the eyes";[15]

she compares unrequited love to

"the wild-hyacinth which on the mountain-side the shepherd treads underfoot, yet it still blooms purple on the ground";[16]

she speaks of spring as the season when

"earth of the many chaplets puts on her broidery";[17]

and we have already heard her tell of the apple-boughs rustling in the breeze, and of the oaks shaken by the down-rushing wind.

She writes of how with Atthis she wandered at night-time in the woods to listen to the nightingales; she speaks of

"the yearning-voiced messenger of spring, the nightingale";[18]

she describes how, in high summer

"the cricket pours forth its sweet shrill song from beneath its wings, when the sun lights the earth with his outspread, perpendicular rays";[19]

and of the doves coming to rest she says,

[15] Aristides, i, 425.
[16] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 106; compare Catullus, xi, 21.
[17] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 164.
[18] Scholiast on Sophocles: *Electra,* 149.
[19] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 142.

"their purpose grows light, and they cease the labor of their wings." [20]

To the evening star she wrote a now lost ode in which she spoke of it as

"the fairest of all the stars that shine"; [21]

and in another fragment, quite haunting for some reason which I cannot define, she says

"O, evening star, you bring all that the blithe dawn has scattered wide; you bring the sheep; you bring the goats; you bring home the child to its mother." [22]

She describes how

"around the glorious moon the bright beauty of the stars is lost when her silver radiance at its fullest lights the world"; [23]

she compares Anaktoria, as we have already noticed, to the red, rising moon at sunset; she speaks of

"maidens taking their place around an altar when the full moon was rising"; [24]

in another fragment which will be quoted later she writes of the setting moon and the Pleiades; [25] and she talks of

[20] Scholiast on Pindar, 1, 10. He says that the words refer to doves.
[21] Himerius: *Orations,* xiii, 9.
[22] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 141.
[23] Eustathius, 729, 20.
[24] Hephæstion, 68.
[25] Hephæstion, 70.

"the queenly dawn," [26]

and

"dawn, the golden-slippered." [27]

But with this appreciation of nature there was combined an intense love of the comforts and elegancies of civilized life. It will be remembered that she reminded Atthis of the luxurious existence she led in her house—how she was waited upon by gentle slave-girls, how she lay upon the softest of beds, and how she was perfumed with precious scents and decked with wreaths of flowers. To some unknown friend she says,

"I will put you to rest on soft cushions,"

and

"you shall lie on cushions new"; [28]

and phrases of hers, such as

"more delicate than water,"

"daintier than rosebuds,"

"softer than fine raiment,"

are quoted as instances of her voluptuousness.[29] She speaks of somebody being

[26] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 174, 42.
[27] Ammonius, 23.
[28] Herodian, 2, 945, 8.
[29] Gregorius: *On Hermogenes* (Walz's *Rhetorica Græca,* vii, 1236).

"wrapped about with soft cambric";[30]

of somebody else wearing

"a many-colored dress, a beautiful piece of Lydian work";[31]

of another dress,

"blended in all sorts of colors";[32]

and Atthis, it will be recalled, spoke of her dressed in saffron and purple and wreathed with flowers.

She refers constantly to the making and wearing of wreaths and necklaces of flowers; she speaks of golden cups of nectar;[33] and she describes the clouds of myrrh, cassia and frankincense curling upwards.[34] Her love of life is expressed in her jest,

"Death is a misfortune: the gods at least think it so, or they would have died";[35]

but life for her was not worth the living without refinement and luxury, and in a very revealing poem, which will be quoted later in full, she says,

"But I love delicate-living, and for me richness and beauty belong to the desire of the sunlight,"[36]

[30] Pollux, 7, 73.
[31] Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Peace,* 1174.
[32] Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes: *Argonautica,* i, 727.
[33] Athenæus, xi, 9.
[34] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1232, 1, 11.
[35] Aristotle: *Rhetoric,* 2, 23.
[36] Athenæus, xv, 35. *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1787, 1.

—that is to say, are one with the desire to live—in reference to which Athenæus, who quotes the lines, remarks that she "hesitates to separate elegance from honorable life."

By means of these quotations—and such scraps and fragments collected from many sources are all that is left us—we can invoke some vague semblance of her out of the mists of time, and can obtain a momentary glimpse of that strange, dark, dainty little person with the purple-black hair and the bewitching smile, whom Lucian called [37] "the delicious glory of the Lesbians," and whom Strabo spoke of as "something miraculous"; and we are able to understand to some extent how it was that one whose words were mingled with flames, as Plutarch says, and beneath whose flesh, as she herself declares, impalpable fire ran tingling, whose passionate episodes were innumerable, and whose whole art's principal theme was love,[38] could have been at the same time a woman of such delicate and faultless refinement and of such intellectual culture that throughout antiquity she was regarded by connoisseurs as the very model of good taste.

Ovid was evidently right in saying that she was safe from the attacks of scandal in her own day: she was too firmly established as the brilliant star of the social and intellectual life of Mitylene to be unseated by the occasional gusts of adverse criticism which were projected against her. There is some evidence of her impregnable position to be found, too, in the fact that at this time she was constantly being called upon to write marriage-odes for the aristocratic young brides and bridegrooms of Lesbos. Her friends seem to have been numberless, and it appears that no wedding of any so-

[37] Lucian: *Loves*, 30. The epithet *melichros* actually means "honey-skinned," and may only have reference to her tawny color; but the sense of "delectable" or "delicious" is inherent in the word.

[38] Pausanias, i, 25, i.

cial distinction was regarded as complete in its appointments unless a nuptial-song had been composed for it by Sappho. Scraps of these odes are scattered over ancient literature, and it will be as well, perhaps, to bring them together here so that we may utilize this aspect of her activities in the building up of our mental picture of her.

Some of the songs were supposed to be gay and amusing, as befitted an occasion which was thought then, as, strangely enough, it still is now, to be suitable to a little ribald jesting; and one such has reference to the erection of the wedding-pavilion:

> Hammer up the rafters, now
> At the wedding;
> Raise them high, carpenter-men,
> At the wedding.
> The bridegroom is as tall as Ares [Mars],
> At the wedding:
> Far taller than the tallest men,
> At the wedding;
> Towering as does the Lesbian poet
> At the wedding
> Over the poets of other countries,
> At the wedding.[89]

The fragment of another song of a jesting kind runs:

"The doorkeeper's feet are seven fathoms long, and his shoes are made of five bull's hides—the work of ten shoemakers; and his father lived in other respects an

[89] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 146, 148; Hephæstion, 132. Pieced together by Edmonds. The word "wedding" is more properly "wedding-song."

honest life, though he *did* claim to be better-born than Cecrops himself." [40]

Here is the fragment of a charming serenade to be sung by the bridesmaids as they sit outside the door of the bridal bedroom, supplying that accompaniment of soft music which even to this day the Greek islanders find helpful in a situation of this kind.

"And we maidens spend all the night at this door, singing of the love between you, richly blessed bridegroom, and your bride of the violet-scented breast. And when the dawn is come and you arise and depart, may the great god Hermes direct your feet whither you shall find no more ill-luck than we to-night shall find sleep." [41]

In another fragment the waiting bridesmaids, having received the customary announcement that the marriage has been consummated, are supposed to burst into song with the words:

"Happy bridegroom, the union has been accomplished as you prayed, and the maiden you prayed for is yours!" [42]

The last line of another song has been found:

[40] Hephæstion, 45: Synesius: *Epistolæ,* iii, 158d. Cecrops was the reputed founder of Athens.
[41] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 56.
[42] Hephæstion, 107.

". . . But come, dear girls, let us cease our singing, for day is nigh at hand." [43]

"Farewell to the bride, farewell to the bridegroom!" [44]

they sing as they depart.

A verse which seems to be Sappho's is quoted by Himerius,[45] and reads:

"Bride, full of rosy love-desires; bride, the most beautiful ornament of Aphrodite of Paphos, go to your marriage-bed, go to the marriage-couch whereon you shall play so gently and sweetly with your bridegroom; and may the evening star lead you willingly to that place, for there you will be astonished at the silver-throned Hera," [the goddess of wedlock].

To another blushing bride she writes: [46]

"Your figure of loveliness, your eyes of the tender look, O bride, and love spread over your beautiful face—Aphrodite has indeed done you honor!"

And: [47]

"O beautiful, O lovely!—yours it is with the rosy-ankled Graces and with Aphrodite to play";

while of yet another she says:

[43] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1232, 1, i, 8.
[44] Hephæstion, 27; Servius: *Vergil,* 1, 31.
[45] Himerius: *Orations,* i, 20.
[46] Choricius, in Graux: *Textes Grecs,* 97.
[47] Himerius: *Orations,* i.

"O bridegroom, never was there another girl like this!" [48]

Sappho, indeed, wrote so many of these marriage-songs that Himerius [49] says she seems to conduct the whole wedding. "She enters the bedroom," he writes, "designs the marriage-couch, makes the bed, gathers the bridesmaid into the bridal-suite, and brings in Aphrodite in her chariot of the Graces with her troop of Love-gods as her playmates." And Demetrius [50] mentions love-matches and weddings as being amongst the chief subjects of her poems. It is impossible, thus, to suppose that she was under a cloud at this time, or was at all generally regarded as a woman of easy virtue: otherwise she would never have been invited, like a popular composer, to write the anthems, so to speak, for these fashionable weddings.

There is another side of her work, moreover, which perhaps indicates that her moral character was held in no low esteem: namely, that of hymn-writing. In her surviving verses there are several fragments of sacred songs of this kind; and it may be that, like the wedding-odes, they were written by request—the priesthood inviting her from time to time to supply the special musical feature at some important religious festival. A few disjointed sentences have survived from several poems to Aphrodite, such as:

"I would have it, golden-wreathed Aphrodite, that such a lot as this were for me"; [51]

and:

[48] Dionysius: *Composition,* 25.
[49] Himerius: *Orations,* i, 4.
[50] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 132.
[51] Apollonius: *Syntax,* 350 (247).

"To thee I will burn the rich fat of a white goat"; [52]

but these, of course, may not have been written for the purpose of public worship. Here is a fragment of a hymn to Adonis which is more definitely ceremonial:

"The slender Adonis is dying, Aphrodite: what can we do?—beat your breasts, damsels, and rend your garments!" [53]

The opening phrase

"Woe for Adonis!" [54]

occurs in two fragments; and the beginning of a hymn to the goddess Hecate reads:

"O Hecate, gold-glittering handmaiden of Aphrodite!" [55]

Sappho, however, supplies a sad little picture of herself vainly trying to write what was obviously a commissioned hymn to Adonis, but being distracted by her own lovesick thoughts: [56]

"Be still, my heart!—for me you cannot throw out in rapid hymn-spurting inspiration an Adonis-song which in beauty of style shall please the goddesses; for dishonoring Desire and heart-conquering Aphrodite have

[52] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 81, 23.
[53] Hephæstion, 64.
[54] Marius Plotius, vi, 516, 517 (Keil).
[55] Philodemus: *Piety:* 42 (Gomperz).
[56] Lobel: *Sapphous Mele,* p. 80; restored by Edmonds in *Cambridge Philological Society's Proceedings,* 1927.

made you speechless, and brain-destroying Peitho from her flagon of gold has poured her sweet nectar upon your wits."

Peitho, I should mention, was Persuasion or Enticement personified as a goddess—the Roman Suada.

Sappho, indeed, cannot have been happy in the task of hymn-writing, except when her hymns were addressed to Aphrodite, whose servant she calls herself.[57] Her talent reached its height in self-expression, in the laying bare of her passionate emotions through the medium of simple, perfectly chosen, beautiful, delicate words and phrases, soft and melodious to the ear and penetrating—electrifying even—to the senses. "There is magic in the songs of Sappho to enchant and bewitch," says Plutarch;[58] and Demetrius writes:[59] "When Sappho sings of beauty her words are full of beauty and sweetness, and so too when she sings of love and springtime and of the halcyon; and in the interweaving of her poetry there is every beautiful word—some of them coined by herself." This was her talent, this sweet, penetrating delicacy, this exquisite precision which no translation can convey to the reader. Like Peitho, from her flagon of gold she poured her nectar upon the wits of her contemporaries; and in her day there seems to have been not one who could so far escape her enchantment as to be able to voice an effective protest against her moral life.

[57] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii) 9.
[58] Plutarch: *Pythian Oracles,* 6.
[59] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 166.

Chapter Fourteen

SAPPHO AT HOME

THE proximity of Lesbos to the city-states of the Ionian Confederacy and to the Kingdom of Lydia must have caused the people of Mitylene to be particularly open to their influence; and there is much in Sappho's poems to suggest that she emulated in her daily life the luxurious habits of those peoples—her statement, for example, that in her house Atthis had enjoyed "all that the most fastidious Ionian could desire." [1] In one respect, however, Lesbos retained a very distinct individuality, namely, in its attitude towards women; for whereas Ionian women of the coast and islands of western Asia Minor were treated very much as they now are in the East, the women of Lesbos, as I have already said, enjoyed a freedom which must have been a continuous source of envy to their sisters in the neighboring countries.

I have pointed out that the Æolians seem to have been more like the Spartans and some of the Dorian peoples in this regard, and certainly they were the very opposite of the Athenians, who kept their women in the background and regarded them as entirely inferior creatures; but even in some of the Doric states it would hardly have been possible for Sappho to have wandered about alone in the woods at night as she tells us she did, or to have gone off with her *hetæræ* to stay in the country, while it would have been very improbable that she would have been able to involve her-

[1] Chapter Nine.

self so deeply in a political plot as to be singled out with its male leaders for banishment.

In speaking, then, as I propose to do in this chapter, of the ordinary circumstances of her daily life, I must invite the reader to imagine her habits and environment as being to some extent Ionian in character, and yet to picture Sappho herself as moving about amidst these rather Oriental surroundings with a freedom which was almost peculiar to her native land.

Her clothes were evidently Ionian; for it will be remembered that Atthis speaks [2] of Sappho's nightdress from Ionian Chios, and of her purple *peplos,* or dress, and her saffron *lōpē,* or loose, surplice-like upper garment. This *lōpē* seems to have been a variety of the Ionian *chitōn,* or tunic of fine linen, which at about this time was becoming fashionable in other parts of the Greek world. A *chitōn* was sometimes a full-length garment divided into a blouse and skirt by a girdle, and sometimes it was simply an upper garment worn either like a blouse or like a surplice or smock over an under-dress. In its blouse form the *chitōn* was tied in at the waist, but in such a way that it hung down in folds over the girdle, these folds being called the *kolpos* or pouch; but sometimes the garment was so long that it permitted the *kolpos* to hang down almost as low as the knees, and even allowed of another *kolpos* at the waist. In its surplice form it either hung free from the shoulders to a point above or below the waist, or else was caught in by the girdle and extended down almost to the knees. Sometimes the *chitōn* had no sleeves but was sewn or pinned above the shoulders; and sometimes it had short, loose sleeves which were slit along the outside of the upper arm, the front and back pieces being fastened together at intervals, revealing glimpses of the arms in the gaps between.

[2] Chapter Nine.

The upper part of the costume, whether separate from the lower part or sewn to it, could be either of the same material and color as the skirt, or entirely different from it. Sometimes the whole dress was white, but the upper part was of a transparent muslin-like texture, wrung when wet and thus crinkled into wavy lines; sometimes the upper garment was decorated with a pattern in bright colors; and sometimes the skirt was the elaborate part of the dress, having, for instance, a perpendicular band of embroidery running down it. In the dress to which Atthis refers the upper part was vivid yellow and the lower part or skirt purple. This skirt was often so full and long that, when walking, women used to take hold of it with one hand and draw it aside; and it will be remembered that Sappho jeers at her rival for not being able to do this gracefully. Over the *chitōn* a soft mantle or cloak was sometimes worn, passing above one shoulder and under the other arm, or hanging lightly over one shoulder and voluminously over the other, or sometimes enveloping the whole figure and covering the head as well.

Occasionally a kind of chemise was worn under the *chitōn,* and it was usual for women whose figures were not all that they used to be to wear some sort of corset, or at any rate a brassière—called *strophion*—which was generally no more than a scarf bound round the bust. On the head a scarf, or a bag-like cap, or a soft straw-hat was sometimes worn in summer, and women often used parasols, which were made to fold up as do those of the present day. Their hair, however, was more frequently considered sufficient covering for the head; and in Sappho's day it was either worn long behind but passing over the front of the shoulders in plaits or ringlets, or else it was knotted low on the nape of the neck, or again, was bound up high on the head with the aid of a folded scarf or ribbon. Leather-soled san-

dals protected the feet, and in the country soft leather shoes were often used, while slippers were just coming into fashion, sometimes having raised heels. Bracelets and necklaces were occasionally added, and diadems too; and at all festivals or parties chaplets and garlands of flowers were worn.

Athenæus [3] has collected various remarks of early writers upon the subject of Ionian dress; and to aid us in forming our picture of Sappho's wardrobe it will be as well to quote some of these. It is true that they refer to men more than to women, but in material and color there was no very great difference between the clothes of the sexes. From Demokritos of Ephesus, he gleans the following: "As for the violet and purple dresses of the Ionians, and their robes of saffron embroidered with circles, these are known to everybody; and the caps which they wear on their heads are likewise embroidered with figures of animals. They also wear garments of yellow, scarlet, or white, and some even of purple; and they wear long robes of Corinthian manufacture, some of them being purple, some violet, and some the color of the hyacinth, and one may also see some which are of flaming red and others of a sea-green hue. . . . One may see, too, those Persian dresses which are woven with a view both to fineness and strength, and are ornamented all over with golden beads, and all the beads have knots of purple thread passing through the middle to fasten them inside the garment." Clothes of this kind, he says, were worn in particular by the wealthy inhabitants of Ionian Ephesus.

Athenaeus quotes Asius, a Samian poet who lived before the time of Sappho, as saying that even then the Ionians of Samos were clothed in the richest finery. "They walk along," he writes, "with carefully combed hair, clad in magnificent robes, whose snow-white folds reach to the ground, with golden ornaments in the shape of grasshoppers upon them,

[3] Athenæus, xii, 28–31.

and golden chaplets holding their loose hair which gracefully waves in the breeze, while on their arms are bracelets richly wrought." Xenophanes, writing shortly after the time of Sappho, described the Ionians of Kolophon as "richly dressed in purple garments, proud of their luxuriously dressed hair wet with costly and sweet-smelling oils"; and Antiphanes, the Attic playwright of the fourth century B. C., describes the Ionians in general as a delicate and luxurious people, clad in long, soft robes.

Sappho seems unquestionably to have been very fond of pretty clothes, and her references to soft cambric, many-colored Lydian stuffs, and so forth, indicate that these descriptions of the dress of the Ionians may be applied also to herself and her friends. We may imagine her in "robes of saffron embroidered with circles," in dresses "of flaming red and of a sea-green hue," in saffron and purple, in white and scarlet, in violet, hyacinth, and blue; and we may picture her thus arrayed, strolling in her rose-garden beside the dazzling sea and under the azure sky, holding a many-colored parasol over her head.

A good deal of make-up was used at this period: the cheeks were rouged, the lips reddened, the skin whitened, the eyebrows penciled in black, and the eyelids shadowed with black or green kohl; and it is not probable that the little poetess presented any exception to this rule. For all we know she may have dyed her hair yellow, for a great many women did so at this time; and there is an ancient reference [4] to her use of the word *skytharron,* which, as the commentator says, was a kind of plant used by the Scythians as a dye, and was the same as *thapsos,* a yellow dye for the hair. But I suppose it is more probable that, in spite of this fashion, she retained her natural black hair; for, as we shall read later, she speaks of it beginning to turn gray as the years went

[4] Scholiast on Theocritus, ii, 88.

by, and, anyhow, we do not know in what connection she mentioned this dye.

So much for her dress; and now let us try to picture her house. At this period houses were very plain on the outside, being usually built of stone or sun-dried brick painted white, the rooms opening onto an unroofed court in the middle of the building and there being few ground-floor windows in the outer walls. Usually the front of the house was a blank, white wall in which was the main door, made of wood and fitted with a knocker. In answer to a knock the door was opened by a slave who sat with a watch-dog in the vestibule; and the visitor was then conducted along a passage to the open courtyard, around the sides of which was a colonnade or loggia. On the side facing south this loggia was deeper and was more like an open hall, the columns which supported the roof being either of carved wood or stone, and the floor being paved. This formed a warm and sunny portico to the dining-room behind, where, in cold weather, two or three portable braziers provided warmth, the later system of central heating having not yet been invented. The walls of this and the other inner rooms were whitewashed and undecorated, and the floors were of hard, smoothed mud, plastered over or paved, and sometimes partly covered with rugs or reed mats.

Interior and exterior stairways led up to the flat roof of the building, upon the back part of which the second-floor rooms were built, these being roofed with red tiles. These upper rooms were lit by windows; but glass window-panes were as yet unknown, and wooden shutters, sometimes of lattice-work, were used to check the sun's rays on summer days or the chill wind on winter nights. Sanitary arrangements were primitive, though drains flushed by water, such as have been found in ancient Crete, may have been known; but there was generally a paved bathroom in which stood

an enormous bathlike basin of marble filled by hand. There was also a small room fitted with a shower-bath: that is to say, when a house stood on the hillside near a stream, the water was conveyed by a channel to a pipe which passed into this room at ceiling-level, and spurted out from a metal nozzle in the form of an animal's head, falling into the trough of the sunken floor, where it lay almost knee-deep as it drained out into the garden. In public baths, or in the larger private houses, there were several such nozzles in the room; and there are pictures of naked men or women standing under these showers and splashing about in the water, their clothes being hung over a high rail. The deep water on the floor must, of course, have suggested to them the idea of constructing a swimming-bath; and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that such plunge-baths were sometimes used, though the actual reference to them is later than the period with which we are dealing.

The furniture in the house of a rich person such as Sappho was very magnificent. There were inlaid wooden chairs with carved backs, their seats thickly cushioned; and there were numerous stools or seats without backs, and also footstools. In the dining-room were many large couches upon which the guests reclined at meals, the wooden legs and framework being elaborately decorated with gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and ornamental stones, and each couch having a soft mattress covered in rich material, and several large cushions. Big tables were not used, but there were many small, three-legged tables, some very richly decorated. There were tall candle-holders in every room, the slender shaft in each case being from four to six feet high, supported, usually, on three legs, and having three or more branches in which the candles were fixed. Small bowl-shaped lamps, with wicks floating in refined oil, were also used.

In the bedrooms, the beds were magnificently decorated,

and were supplied with soft mattresses and pillows and with richly embroidered covers; while dresses, shoes, toilet articles, jewelry, and so forth, were kept in numerous chests and boxes, sometimes of very fine workmanship. In the storerooms food-supplies and other things were kept in large pottery bins; and there was always a great array of dishes, jugs, cups, and so forth, of gold, silver, bronze, stone, faience, and pottery. The time was told by a shadow-pointer, and water-clocks were already known, these being stone vessels filled with water to a marked level, the water slowly draining away at an ascertained rate. Amongst articles of the toilet, there were mirrors of polished metal, long hair-pins of metal, ivory, or bone, with ornamented heads, ordinary pins, safety-pins more or less like the modern article, tweezers, ivory or wooden combs, bottles and pots for scent, rouge-pots, kohl-pots, little trays and dishes, and so forth.

Sappho doubtless possessed an extensive library,[5] the books —that is to say, scrolls—being kept in chests divided for the purpose into pigeon-holes; and since many modern writers seem to question the use of such scrolls in her time I must draw attention to the fact that Herodotus expressly refers to scrolls of papyrus or parchment as having been introduced before this period into Greece by way of Ionia,[6] as, of course, anybody might have guessed, since papyrus had already been in use in Egypt for two thousand years, and Egypt had been in touch with the Greek world for centuries. The Greeks, I may mention, rendered the Egyptian word for a papyrus-scroll as *byblos,* whence came their word *biblion,* a "book," from which our word "bible" and compounds such as "bibliography" are derived. Wooden tab-

[5] Big libraries are known to have been collected in Sappho's day by Polykrates of Samos and Pisistratos of Athens.

[6] Herodotus, v. 58.

lets with wax surfaces were also used in Sappho's time, the letters being scratched with a metal or ivory stylus.

There was considerable variety in the food which was eaten in the houses of the rich; and though the meals were simple as compared with those in later Rome, they were skilfully cooked and by no means primitive. The favorite meats were pork, kid, veal, beef, and hare, all of which were usually roasted, though boiled meat was also common; and geese, ducks, chickens, pheasants, partridges, pigeons, quails, thrushes, and various small birds, were eaten. Tripe, pigs'-trotters, liver, tongue, and highly seasoned sausages, were all popular; and snails were a common dish. All the usual kinds of fish were eaten, and also eels, lampreys, congers, and polypi; but tunny-fish was generally the favorite, while anchovies were considered a delicacy, and we read of them being fried in oil with nettles, spices, and condiments. Sardines were sometimes wrapped in young fig-leaves and fried; and herrings were eaten either fresh or salted. Oysters, muscles, crabs, lobsters, shrimps, cuttle-fish, and many kinds of smaller shell-fish were eaten; and caviar was not uncommon.

The usual vegetables were onions, leeks, turnips, carrots, beans, peas, lentils, cabbage, artichokes, asparagus, beet, marrow, pumpkins, radishes, cucumbers, lettuce, cress, and also nettles; and mushrooms were always in great demand. Truffles were also very much liked. Onions were eaten raw, boiled, or fried; and garlic was much used. The list of fruits is small, for oranges, lemons, and many other of our common fruits were then unknown; but amongst those which were usual were figs, pomegranates, apples, quinces, dates and mulberries. The most common nuts were almonds, chestnuts and pistachios; but acorns were also eaten. Condiments and herbs for seasoning, or for making the many sauces which were used, included mustard, pepper, capers,

sage, parsley, anise, marjoram, mint, sesame, thyme, rue, caraway, coriander, and a plant with a resinous juice, called silphium. Salt, vinegar, and olive-oil must of course be mentioned and, indeed, nearly everything was cooked in olive-oil; but sugar was unknown, honey being used instead. Of dairy products, goat's milk was preferred to cows'; cheese of various kinds was popular; but butter was not used. Ducks' and hens' eggs were much eaten; but the favorites were those of the peahen. Bread was usually made from wheat either with or without yeast, but barley-bread was also common; and there were many sorts of cakes, the most common being made with honey and sesame.

The wine of Lesbos was considered to be very excellent, as has already been said, but many other sorts were imported, including the famous Chian, from the neighboring island of Chios. Undiluted wine was only drunk at certain times and in small quantities: the usual custom was to pour it into double or treble the quantity of water—the wine at this period being always poured into the water, not the water into the wine. Honey and spices were sometimes added, especially when it was to be drunk hot; but generally speaking the wine and water were served as cold as possible, and if supplies of snow from the mountains were not available, the wine-jars were kept at the bottom of the garden-well until required. Beer, though popular in Egypt and other countries, was never appreciated by the Greeks; and, in fact, wine, water, and milk were practically the only available beverages.

The first meal of the day was *akratisma,* or breakfast, which consisted chiefly of bread soaked in wine, and some fruit. Then, some time before noon, *ariston,* or luncheon, was eaten, this being a substantial meal. But the chief meal of the day was *deipnon,* or dinner, which was usually served towards sunset; and, when guests were being entertained, this meal was followed by the *symposion,* or drinking-party,

which was often kept up until dawn. It is however, a significant fact that Sappho, in all the fragments of her work which we possess, never once refers directly to wine-drinking by herself or her friends; and it would seem, therefore, that she took no interest in that kind of party. It was not considered correct for ladies to take part in a *symposion,* and, usually, the only women present were the improper little dancing girls and female musicians who entertained the company first with the accomplishments pertaining to their profession and then with the arts common to their sex; but Sappho was sufficiently unconventional to have ignored such a point of etiquette, and I think we must assume that her silence upon the subject was due to her dislike of it. In her young days, when, for example, she was in banishment at Pyrrha and was the boon-companion of the aristocratic exiles there assembled, she may have seen quite enough of male behavior under the influence of wine to arouse in her a distaste not far short of loathing for this form of amusement; and her delicate, fastidious nature may well have been outraged by the crudities of an entertainment which so often ended in bestiality. At any rate, a brief account of a party of this kind will provide, I think, sufficient explanation of the absence of any reference to such affairs in her work, and will enable us to understand her seeming preference for the society of her *hetæræ.*

On the occasion of a banquet the dining-room was decorated with branches of trees, and flowers were strewn over the floor. The guests as they arrived were tended in the vestibule by slaves, who removed the visitors' shoes, washed their feet and their hands—using gold or silver ewers and basins and soft linen towels—and then sprinkled them with perfume, and wreathed and crowned them with flowers. It was not considered good manners to go directly to the feast, but, rather, the guest was expected to show a mental superior-

ity to the matter of food by wandering about the house, admiring its appointments and so forth until, as though casually, his steps led him to the decorated dining-room, at sight of which he was expected to express astonishment and delight, and to declare that he had had no idea. . . .

Large and magnificent couches, heaped with huge pillows, stood around the candle-lit room; and on these the guests placed themselves, generally two to a couch, propping themselves up almost into a sitting position by means of the cushions, but leaning somewhat on their left arm and side so that the right hand was free, the upper part of their bodies being nearest to the middle of the room, and their legs extending diagonally across the couches towards the outside of the circle. Naked boys, chosen for their beauty, and wearing not even a loin-cloth, then brought in a bowl of powerful, unmixed wine, small quantities being drunk by the guests, these preliminary potations corresponding to our modern cocktails or sherry; and after this the first course of the meal was brought in upon small tables, one table being placed in front of each guest. This course consisted of various meats and vegetables, all cut up and ready to be eaten with the aid of the fingers, for knives and forks were not used, though ivory spoons were available for the more liquid fare. From time to time the guests wiped their fingers upon lumps of bread, or, if they had made a particular mess of themselves, the boys brought them water and napkins; and again and again new dishes were placed before them.

At last the tables were removed, and others were brought in for the second course, the dishes this time containing sweets, puddings, and dessert. A master of ceremonies was now appointed, and presently great bowls of water and pots of wine were carried to him by the slave-boys, it being his business to pour the wine into the water and to add honey or spices according to what he believed to be the company's

taste. Nothing had been drunk with the first course, except in individual cases of need; and even now there was no excessive drinking until the guests were replete, and substantial food had been replaced by little dishes of thirst-inducers, such as salted cheese and fried onions, or highly spiced slices of sausage, or anchovies. Then some wine was spilt as a libation to the gods, a lusty, hymn-like song was sung, and the evening's real drinking began.

After a while various entertainers were brought in—conjurors, jugglers, acrobats, tight-rope-walkers, comedians, and clowns; and presently a whole chorus of girls came trooping in, some of them being flute-players or singers, and others dancers, and all of them being richly dressed and bedecked with ornaments, and having their faces powdered and rouged, their eyes thickly darkened, and their eyelashes lengthened and stiffened out with mastic. *Scolia,* or drinking-songs, were now sung by the guests themselves, most of whom could play the harp or could accompany one another on the flute, just as in modern times somebody or other at a party can usually be induced to play the piano or some smaller instrument, or to sing a song.

The poet Alkaios, in one of his verses,[7] tells his fellow guests at an entertainment of this kind to defy the wintry weather outside with a big fire and a good supply of wine; and one can imagine the room becoming excessively warm, what with the fire and the many candles. In this heated atmosphere, heavy with the smell of perfumes, wine, and onions, the men were accustomed to remove their robes from the upper part of their bodies, and to loll on the cushions nude to the waist, their skin glistening with scented oil or natural moisture, and their hair dripping with the pomade which the host caused to be handed round from time to

[7] Athenæus, x, 35.

time to cool their heads.[8] Occasionally people would come in, rather drunk, from other parties, bringing dancing-girls with them; and uninvited guests—the pests of modern society—were already an established nuisance.

There was a very popular game at this time, known as *kottabos,* which was usually played during a drinking party. The players endeavored to fling the dregs of wine from their cups across the room into various sorts of receptacles; and the floor, of course, was soon running with the badly aimed liquid. Sometimes the target was a metal bowl, and the accuracy of the aim and the kind of sound made by the wine in falling into it were regarded as signs of good or bad luck and of whether a sweetheart were true or false. Sometimes small bowls floating in a large basin of water were used as targets, the object being to sink one of these at a throw; and in a more complicated form of the game a statuette stood submerged below the surface of the water whereon the bowls floated, and the endeavor was to sink one of these bowls so that it went down exactly onto the figure's head. In making the throw one handle of the cup was held with the fingers of the right hand, and the wrist was bent inwards so that the other side of the cup nearly touched the right armpit, a quick wrist-movement outwards then projecting the wine in its flight across the room.

As the evening went on and a state of intoxication became general, the dancing-girls were often put up to auction or otherwise distributed amongst the guests; and there was no attempt to conceal what followed. Men who had drunk more than their stomachs could hold often required of these girls or of the slave-boys no more than that they should bring them basins or should mop up that for which the basins had been fetched too late; and all such incidents were enacted

[8] Athenæus, xv, 45.

with laughter and without shame. In the end, half the guests were left in drunken oblivion upon the couches or the floor, while the others staggered home as the dawn broke.

Such was the usual *symposion;* and it is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that Sappho does not appear to have indulged her taste for the unconventional by taking any part in amusements of this kind.

Chapter Fifteen

DAILY LIFE IN MITYLENE

THE matters discussed in the preceding chapter—dress, furniture, food, and so forth—lead the thoughts on to the subject of other manners and customs which may serve to vitalize the mind's picture of Sappho's daily life. Let us, then, leave her white-walled house amongst the trees, and make our imagined way into the *agora,* or market-place of the city, where the multitude of the people of Mitylene may be pictured passing to and fro before us in noisy, highly colored array.

There can be no question, I am afraid, that the market-place itself and the streets leading into it were not in actuality as clean as our fair dream of long ago would have them. It is true that there were men employed by the municipality, whose business it was to keep the roads and public places swept and tidy; but the condition of the city—the bad odors, the swarms of flies, the dirt and litter—may be imagined if we remember that there were no drains, and that the garbage and slops were usually thrown from the houses into the streets without any regard for rules of sanitation. Fortunately, the sun was strong and the air not humid; and thus conditions were no worse than they are to-day in some of the little towns of Mexico, for example, or in North African cities such as Tunis or Algiers, and there, as the traveler knows, the unpleasantnesses are not really intolerable and one soon becomes habituated to them.

In the market-place every kind of merchandise of the

period was sold, both at temporary stalls and in permanent shops. Besides the vendors of food and wine, there were perfume-sellers, florists, wreath-makers, basket-makers, tailors, old-clothes merchants, carpenters, metal-workers, potters, money-changers, barbers, manicurists, and so forth. The market was opened each morning by the ringing of a bell or the blowing of a horn, and most of the business was done before noon. In Mitylene, unlike Athens and most other Greek cities, the women seem freely to have attended the market, and there was no disgrace attached to the appearance there of a lady of social standing. Goods, however, were not carried home by the purchasers, but were sent later by errand-boys and porters; and it does not appear that women ever strolled about or sat talking with their friends in the porticoes, as did the men. The barbers and manicurists performed their tasks in the open while their clients talked; and in this regard I may mention that the Greek men of this period, and, indeed, right on until the time of Alexander the Great, were always bearded, though their beards were neatly trimmed, usually into a projecting point, and their upper lip was sometimes shaved.

There were innumerable festivals and public holidays during which the city was *en fête* and the *agora* given over to the crowds. Amongst these may be mentioned the Apollonia, or festival of Apollo; the Artemisia, or festival of the virginal Artemis, at which there was a great procession to the temple of that goddess a few miles north of Mitylene; the Aphrodisia, a festival in honor of Aphrodite, which was a licensed occasion for lewdness of that primitive kind which was not then considered obscene; the Dionysia, in honor of Dionysos, when everybody drank too much, and the noise of beating drums and clashing cymbals was deafening; the Heræa, or festival of Hera, during which there was a beauty-contest called *kallisteia;* the Poseidonia in celebration of

Poseidon's majesty of the sea; the Anthesphoria, a spring festival of flowers in honor of Demeter and other deities of the earth; and the Thesmophoria, also in honor of Demeter. There must have been four or five such festivals in every month, and, indeed, so often was there merrymaking of some sort or other, so happy were the people, and so beautiful the country and the climate, that Lesbos was sometimes reckoned as one of the Islands of the Blessed.[1]

Besides these public festivals there were many occasions of private rejoicings which often aroused a whole neighborhood or filled a street with a noisy crowd. When a male child was born to a personage of importance, for instance, there was a great to-do; and the birth of a girl was also celebrated with considerable enthusiasm. The crowd which gathered outside a house on learning of an *accouchement* within, was notified of the sex of the new arrival by the placing of an olive-wreath over the door if it were a boy, and a bunch of woolen ribbons if it were a girl. A few days after the happy event the father gave a party to his relations and friends, both men and women, and on the tenth day the *amphidromia,* or ceremony of naming the child and receiving it into the family, was performed, at which the baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, was carried around the domestic hearth, with the whole company dancing and capering after it, and was presented before the altar of the household gods, while the mother was "purified" by a short religious ceremony. Toasted cheese and radishes soaked in oil were eaten; and then followed a banquet at which both sexes drank a great deal of wine, and the fun was kept up far into the night.

Sappho had been through all this sort of thing at the birth of her daughter, Kleïs, and doubtless she had attended many such ceremonies in other houses. She had successfully

[1] Diodorus Siculus, v, 82.

brought the little girl through those years of infancy in which at that time the mortality was terribly high; and now that Kleïs was growing towards womanhood the devoted mother could feel herself fully qualified to look after the many young girls who were placed in her care.

In early childhood boys ran about quite naked or with a little cloak thrown over their shoulders; but girls wore a single garment which extended down to their ankles, and even while they were young they were taught to have a sense of dress and to carry themselves with grace. They were made to dance almost as soon as they could walk, and music was an essential part of their education. In Lesbos the girls were as well-educated as the boys, and, like them, learned to read and write, to understand grammar, and to do simple sums; but in the case of both sexes athletics and gymnastics, including swimming, were regarded as of more importance than mental training. For the amusement of children there were many toys and playthings, amongst which may be mentioned dolls with movable limbs, rattles, toy drums and musical instruments, toy carts and boats, hobbyhorses, carts big enough for a child to sit in while being pulled about by a friend or sometimes by a pair of goats or dogs, swings, seesaws, toy furniture and cooking utensils, hoops, tops, kites, balls, and knucklebones. Blind-man's buff was a favorite game, and some sort of game of forfeits was often played.

A wedding was the great occasion of private rejoicing, and such an event in an important household drew a crowd which blocked the street. It generally took place in January or February, the idea being, apparently, that the first child should be born in the following winter, which was the most healthy time of year. Ionian girls were considered of marriageable age at about fourteen or fifteen, but in Lesbos it seems to have been usual to postpone the event—as did

the Spartans—until they were fully grown, while the bridegroom was usually over twenty and had generally kept a mistress for some years previously, continence being regarded as unwholesome.

Weddings always took place in the evening. Some time during the afternoon the bride was given a ceremonial bath in holy-water obtained from some sacred well or stream, after which she was dressed in fine new clothes, and a veil of transparent cambric was draped about her and over her flower-wreathed head, but not so as to conceal her rouged and painted little face or her hands with their well-manicured and red-stained fingernails. The bridegroom, meanwhile, was also bathed in sacred water, and was robed in white, a wreath of flowers being placed upon his carefully curled and scented hair; after which, towards sunset, he drove with his best man to the bride's house in a chariot drawn by two horses or mules, accompanied by a number of noisy men-friends, and watched by a crowd of townspeople. Both his and the bride's house were decorated with ivy, bay, branches of evergreen trees and flowers; and on his arrival he was greeted with music and cheers as he passed in under the canopy of foliage. A big dinner-party followed, at which relations and friends, both male and female, toasted the happy pair, and made suggestive jokes which would have brought a blush to the cheeks of the young bride had she not been entirely familiar since infancy with all that they implied.

After dinner the girl, coming out of the house, took her place beside the bridegroom upon the driving-seat of the chariot, and the best man got in behind; men and women carrying torches ranged themselves around; flute-players and singing bridesmaids formed up in front; and thus the procession set out under a shower of flowers and a battery of cheers, jeers, and good wishes. The bridegroom's mother

met them at the door of his home; and as the bride crossed the threshold the pair were pelted with confetti and grain, while the company sang the hymenæan hymn, which corresponded to the modern wedding-march.

The actual wedding ceremony was simple: the bridegroom took the bride's hand and led her to the altar of the household gods, a boy playing a flute walking ahead, and women holding flaming torches flanking them. No vows were made, but this presentation of the bride to the domestic gods of the bridegroom's family legalized the union; and immediately afterwards the bride's new mother-in-law led her to the bedroom, the bridesmaids pushing the girl from behind as she enacted the traditional pretense of reluctance, and encouraging her with ribald remarks about the enjoyable nature of the experience before her. The candle-lit room was decorated with foliage and strewn with flowers, and the bed was wet with perfumes; and here in this scented atmosphere the women left the girl and gathered outside the door.

The bridegroom was now conducted to the room by his merry friends and relatives, who slapped him on the back, and urged him forward. Having entered the room, he locked the door, and his first business was to unveil the bride and to eat a quince with her as a pledge of future sweetness of speech. Meanwhile the company outside banged and kicked the door, and shouted jokes and encouraging suggestions through the cracks; while the bridesmaids sang one of those songs so often composed by Sappho, and beat time to it by stamping their feet and clapping their hands. To the accompaniment of this din the marriage was consummated; and it was only when the bridegroom came to the door and announced that all was as it should be that the people outside took their departure, though the bridesmaids grouped themselves nearby and continued to sing for the greater part of

the night. Next morning, the newly married couple received the congratulations of their friends; but that night the bridegroom slept at the house of the bride's father, so as to give her the opportunity of quiet sleep, and it was only on the third day that he returned to her, another dinner-party being given that evening.

It might be thought that proceedings of so crude a character would have been likely to offend the fastidious Sappho; but obviously, on the contrary, they amused and pleased her, as her wedding-odes clearly show. In these poems she imagines herself with the bridesmaids singing outside the door, and, as Himerius says, she gives the impression that she is conducting the whole affair. The explanation, however, is not far to seek. We have to remember that traditional habit and assuetude can remove all consciousness of indecency from the minds of the actors in such a scene. Practically all this ribaldry, all this calling a spade a spade, is still habitual at the weddings of many Greeks at the present day; and, in fact, I may confess that, as a benighted traveler enjoying the hospitality of certain Greek farmers in the Near East, I have myself stood beneath the bridal window and have joined in the cheering and the flag-waving when the bridegroom announced from above that all was well.

Similar customs were prevalent in England until a few centuries ago; and to this day we in the West make a public festival of this nuptial event which ought to be so private and so romantically secret; we display our brides veiled as though they were being initiated into some unmentionable rite; and we send the pair off upon their obvious business with cheers and laughter and with no shame. But if this be so in our own prudish days we may easily understand how little cause for embarrassment there was in Sappho's age, when such matters were the common subjects of talk from early childhood, when a large part of the ordinary rites of

religion was sexual, when the commonest symbols were ithyphallic, and when this particular relation of men and women was regarded as a matter calling for no concealment whatsoever in words and very little in practice. Sappho was unquestionably delicate-minded. She was never coarse, her poems are never gross; and yet I am sure that we are to picture her banging upon the door of the bridal-chamber and making witty remarks through the keyhole.

A word must be said upon the subject of death and burial. When a person died the body lay in state in the house, dressed in white garments and having a wreath of flowers upon the head. A coin was placed upon the tongue to serve as the soul's fare across the Styx; and the fact that it was placed here instead of in the hand was probably due in part to the custom in lifetime of carrying any single coin or small valuable in the mouth when the hands were engaged, there being no pockets in the clothes. Around the body women of the household, augmented by professional mourners, stood for hours, throwing up their arms above their heads from time to time and uttering moans, shrill cries, and sometimes deafening shrieks, while both men and women joined in the monotonous singing of the death-chant. Every now and then a paid mourning-woman would break into a simulated paroxysm of grief, tearing her hair and dress, beating her breast, lacerating her face with her fingernails, and shrieking the house down, calling the dead by name and declaring that his or her loss was more than could be borne, while the other women watched her outburst with approval, each awaiting a good opportunity to make a similar contribution to the general hysteria.

The funeral usually took place before sunrise on the first or second morning after the death. The body was carried in procession through the streets, lying upon a bier and covered by a pall, the male relatives usually walking in front

and the women behind, all wearing black, or at any rate dark, clothes, and the nearest female relations having cut off part of their hair. In the cemetery outside the city the corpse was either interred or cremated, both customs prevailing, as in our own time; but if the body were burnt the ashes were collected into an urn or box and were buried. After the funeral a meal was provided for the mourners at the house of the deceased; and from time to time in the ensuing years the grave was visited and offerings of food and drink were deposited there, until at length, as is the way of the world, these attentions ceased because of the fading of memory.

At births, weddings, funerals, and other occasions when a rich man's house was more or less thrown open to the public, there were many who came thither for the sake of a free meal; and social parasites of this kind are very frequently mentioned by early writers,[2] who make great fun of the manner in which these people ingratiate themselves. In early times the term *parasitos,* "one beside the food," was used to denote an ordinary servant of the temple who was given his meals out of the sacred supplies; but by the time of Sappho the word had already come to mean a man who got his dinner for nothing, and the term was one of reproach. But the Greeks were very hospitable, and the host was usually quite willing to feed these parasites provided that they contributed something to the conversation and general entertainment, if only by flattery all round.

A householder was always ready, too, to give a bed to any stranger who came to him with an introduction, and there were several guest-rooms in a large house where strangers could stay for a few days. In such cases it was usual for the host to receive his guest at dinner on the first day, but afterwards to let him provide for himself, the stranger merely using the room and the kitchen. In many

[2] Athenæus, vi, 26–55.

cases Sappho's *hetæræ,* one may suppose, lived in this manner, occupying her guest-rooms, but buying their own food and being waited upon by their own servants; yet, since she was so wealthy, she may well have defrayed all the expenses of some of them.

I was speaking just now of the custom of putting artificial color upon the face, and some elaboration of this subject seems to be called for. The skin was generally whitened by a preparation of lead carbonate, or white lead, obtained by treating that metal with the fumes of vinegar; for the ancients had no idea that they were thus exposing themselves to an insidious poison which must often have been the unsuspected cause of paralysis, loss of power in the fingers and wrists, and painful colic. The cheeks were slightly reddened by a rouge made of vegetable coloring or red ochre; the eyebrows were penciled with lamp-black; the eyelids were shadowed with diluted *ḳohl* or antimony, a metal found in the island of Lesbos; the eyelashes were darkened and then fixed with white of egg mixed with pounded gum-ammoniac or mastic; and the lips appear to have been reddened with rouge prepared with grease hardened into a sort of pencil very like the modern lipstick.

This treatment of the face does not appear to have produced a very unnatural, or mask-like effect, although the white lead when put on thickly must have been almost an enamel. The degree of artificiality was probably no greater than that to be seen in modern women, although, it is true, some early writers speak of obvious furrows being made in the make-up by tears or perspiration; but this is an accident which happens at the present day also. Women in Lydia and the East certainly did paint themselves up so unnaturally that their faces must have looked like bizarre masks; but the Greeks seem to have been more restrained in this respect—

a fact which is indicated by the great care they took of their natural complexion.

Skin-creams were usually based on castor-oil, olive-oil or oil of almonds, the latter being the oil most extensively used for the purpose to-day. A tincture made from almonds, or from the root of the almond-tree, was also employed as a facewash for clearing the complexion, being sometimes mixed with hydromel, a decoction of honey and water. Early writers speak of an oily preparation called *Oisypē* (the Roman *Oesypum*), and Pliny tells us that it was obtained by boiling the wool of sheep over a slow fire, and then, when cool, collecting the fat from the surface of the water and drying it in the sun. This is nothing more nor less than lanoline, which is the fatty matter derived, by boiling, from crude wool, and, as everybody knows, is widely used in face-creams at the present day. Neatsfoot oil, obtained by boiling down the hoofs of oxen, was popular in Sappho's time, and is still used in the manufacture of face-creams.

Various creams and washes were used for removing wrinkles, freckles, and spots. A paste for removing wrinkles, for instance, was made by a four hours' boiling of sulphur, the plant called alkanet, a semi-vitrified oxide of lead now known as litharge, and fish-glue: this was kept on the face for three or four hours, and then washed off. Another preparation was made with burnt and powdered crab-shells mixed with honey, applied each day for a week, followed by fomentations of white of egg. Oil of mastic was used to prevent perspiration. Superfluous hair was removed by plucking, and its renewed growth checked by depilatories, the most famous of which was called *psilotrum* and was made of arsenic and lime. To singe off the hair with red-hot fragments of burnt walnut-shells was said to soften it, if not to remove it permanently.

There was considerable variety in the perfumes used in Sappho's day,[3] particularly amongst these Greeks of the eastern Ægean who were in touch with the Orient. Rose, violet, lily, iris, lotus, jasmine, narcissus, crocus, quince-blossom, and fenugreek (rather like clover), were all popular; but the aromatic or incense-like preparations were greater favorites. Musk, for instance, which is used to-day in many perfumes, and which is obtained from the male musk-deer of the Himalayas, was a highly prized article of commerce in the time of Alexander the Great, and was probably already used, as also was spikenard, an aromatic oil from the Indian *nardus,* a plant something like valerian. Most of the perfumes had in them a little myrrh, a resinous incense-gum obtained from certain spice-trees; and crocus and myrrh formed a very popular combination. Other resinous scents were obtained from the ladanum-plant, from the cypress-tree, from a gum called storax which is still used in making incense, from a juice known as opobalsam, which is the famous "balm of Gilead," and so forth; and these were often mixed with spices such as sesame, amomum (a kind of ginger), cardamom, cinnamon, saffron, marjoram, thyme, and mint. The royal perfume of ancient Persia was composed of no less than twenty-five different scents blended together; and perhaps this is the particular composition which Sappho mentions as having been used by Atthis.[4]

Modern perfumes, of course, are prepared with alcohol; but in ancient times oil was always used, and these preparations were sometimes of a thick, oily consistency, only a small quantity being rubbed on the skin. Often, too, they were made up into a grease or cream, in which case they were kept in little alabaster pots or box-like receptacles. In later Greek times, and perhaps already in Sappho's day,

[3] Athenæus, xv, 34–46.
[4] Chapter Nine.

ladies did not confine themselves to the use of one perfume at a time, but employed different scents for different parts of their bodies, one such combination being palm-oil on the face and breast, marjoram on the hair and eyebrows, essence of thyme on the throat and knees, extract of mint on the arms, and myrrh on the legs and feet. Sappho, indeed, as she walked about must have exhaled a fragrance which in our day would almost induce a headache; and close proximity to her must have been an olfactory adventure. Her wealth enabled her to make use of every sweet and intoxicating scent then on the market; and one may be sure that when she came from her bath, well-rubbed with myrrh, spikenard and the oil of many flowers, and reclined upon her scented couch in a room heavy with incense, her *hetæræ* and her friends must have approached her with gasps of wonder and delight.

Chapter Sixteen

SAPPHO'S INVOCATION TO APHRODITE

DIONYSIUS of Halicarnassus, the celebrated rhetorician, who was working in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Augustus, wrote a book on literary composition, and in it, to our good fortune, he quoted in full an ode to Aphrodite written by Sappho, his object being, as he says, to illustrate "the verbal beauty and enchantment of her cohesion and smoothness of construction." This ode,[1] which is in seven verses composed in what is known as the Sapphic meter, is the only complete and undamaged poem now left to us out of all the nine books of verse written by her; but, as Dionysius indicates, it represents the summit of her art, and it is therefore one of the great treasures which have been preserved from antiquity.

The ode is an appeal to Aphrodite that again she may help the love-sick Sappho as she has helped her before; and thus it would seem that it was written at a time when her early love for Atthis was a thing of the past, and when she had once more become the victim of her nature's anomalous tendencies. Now there are two or three fragmentary love-poems addressed by Sappho to Gongyla of Kolophon, one of her *hetæræ;* and, in the absence of any actual information, the guess may be ventured that this ode was inspired by her unrequited love for this beautiful Ionian girl who had come to her from across the sea. In prose translation its seven verses read as follows:

[1] Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Composition,* 23.

"Throned on many colors,[2] undying Aphrodite, child of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I pray thee do not with anguish nor with torture break down, lady, my heart,

But come hither, if ever before at any time thou hast heard my voice from afar and hast hearkened, and hast left thy Father's domain, the golden, and hast come

With yoked chariot, and towards the dark earth the strong pinions of thy two swans,[3] fair and swift, have drawn thee, beating down from heaven through the mid-ether.

Quickly then thou camest; and thou, O blest lady, with a smile on thine undying face, quietly didst ask what had now upset me, and wherefor I called,

And what thing it was that I so much wanted thus to accomplish in my mad heart. 'Whom now must I tempt to give thee her love? Who is it, Sappho, that hurts thee?

For even if she fly now, she soon shall follow; if she spurn the gift, yet shall she give; and if she love not, still shall she soon love, though she be not willing.'

Come to me now! Loose me from cruel trouble, and accomplish for me that thing which my heart desireth to be accomplished: thyself be my assistant!"

The peculiar, eleven-syllabled meter in which this poem is written in the original is said to have been invented either by Sappho or by Alkaios, but to have been named after the former; [4] and it seems to me that its rhythm must have been suggested by the beating of a drum, for all those who have traveled in Egypt and the East will recognize in it the

[2] *Poikilothrona,* "Many color throned"; but in some texts the word is *Poikilophrona,* "Many-wiled."

[3] *Strouthos* is any sort of bird; but the use of the dual indicates that Aphrodite's two swans are meant.

[4] Hephæstion, 43.

haunting and insistent throb of the native tom-tom. The meter of the first three lines of each verse is:

Long, short; *long,* short; *long,* short, short; *long,* short; *long,* short;

and of the fourth line:

Long, short, short; *long,* short.

The resemblance to the drum-beat will be apparent if the meter be tapped out with the hand upon a table, the long feet being sounded by the base of the palm, and the short feet by the finger-tips. The above translation falls very easily into this rhythm, and I think it will be as well to repeat the poem in this Sapphic meter, stressing the accents by italics.

"*Throned* in *col*ours, *un*dying *Aph*rod*i*te,
Child of *Zeus,* thou *weav*er of *wiles,* I *pray* thee
Do not *with* this *an*guish nor *with* this *tor*ture
Break my heart, *La*dy;

But come *hith*er *if* e'er be*fore* at *such* time
Thou has *heard* my *voice* from a*far* and *hear*kened,
And hast *left* thy *Fath*er's do*main,* the *gold*en,
And hast de*scend*ed

With thy *char*iot *yoked,* and to*wards* the *dark* earth
The strong *pin*ions *of* the two *swans* have *drawn* thee,
Fair and *swift*ly, *beat*ing down *hence* from *heav*en
Through the mid-*eth*er.

O, blest *La*dy, *quick* then thou *cam*est *to* me,
And, a *smile* upon thine un*dy*ing *face,* thou

*Qui*etly didst *ask* what had *now* up*set* me,
*Where*for I *called* thee,

And what *thing* it *was* that I *so* much *want*ed
In my *mad* heart *thus* to ac*com*plish. '*Whom* now
Must I *tempt* to *give* thee her *love?* Who *is* it,
*Sap*pho, that *hurts* thee?

Even if she *fly* now, she *soon* shall *fol*low;
If she *spurn* the *gift* now, yet *shall* she *give* it;
If she *love* not, *still* shall she *soon* be *lov*ing
Though all un*will*ing!'

Come to *me* now! *Loose* me from *cru*el *trou*ble,
And ac*com*plish *for* me that *thing* which *my* heart
So de*sir*eth *to* be ac*com*plished; *thy*self
Be my as*sis*tant!"

In translation, of course, the beauty of the original language is lost; but the composition in itself is charming, and the frank, simple artlessness of it is able to be apprehended. Simplicity and frankness, indeed, were amongst Sappho's most outstanding charms; and it is these qualities, combined, as I have already said, with her fastidious choice of beautiful words, her polished smoothness and her unerring rhythm, which give her verses their distinction and lend disarming enchantment to all that she has to say. Horace has called her *mascula Sappho,* "virile Sappho," [5] and this is true; yet the description of her given by Athenæus [6] as "a thorough woman" is truer, for there is about her poems a diffused femininity, and, as Demetrius says, [7] "she handles even her

[5] Horace: *Epistles,* 1, 19, 28. The word is not so definite as our "masculine."

[6] Athenæus, xv, 35.

[7] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 140.

most forceful passages in a charming way." This ode to Aphrodite is essentially feminine; and its haunting beauty belongs wholly to that feminine world in which a male biographer can but feel himself to be in some sense an intruder. This is not the well-known hymeneal Aphrodite who is here invoked, not the beautiful, robust patroness of the passionate union of man and maid: this gentle, inscrutable, smiling goddess who asks "Whatever is the matter *now?*" is a creation of the more capricious feminine mind. She is that Aphrodite born of the airy foam of the sea, intangible, diaphanous, inconsequent, infinitely removed from all considerations of natural purpose, completely outside the things dreamt of in Horatio's philosophy; and in her invocation Sappho is not *mascula.*

It is possible that when the poetess first began to find her peace of mind disturbed by Gongyla she hesitated, dismayed by those symptoms of impending infatuation which she knew so well, and dreading the inevitable sorrows and disturbances to come. It seems that she almost wanted to die. She longed for that emotionless quiescence and dreamy content enjoyed by the souls who wander forever in the moonlight of Death beside the still waters whereon the lotus-flowers, moist with dew, lie in their heavily scented sleep; for there is the fragment of a poem,[8] without beginning or end, which reads:

". . . Gongyla said to me: 'Surely you cannot tell, or have your eyes seen a sign?' 'But most certainly,' I said, 'Hermes came to me in a dream, and I said, "O Master, I am utterly lost, for, by the Blessed One I swear, I do not care very much any longer that I am prominent in wealth,[9] and indeed a longing possesses me to be dead

[8] *Berliner Klassikertexte,* P. 9722, 4, restored by Edmonds.
[9] *Olbos,* wealth, happiness, or prosperity.

and to see the lotus-covered, dewy banks of Acheron," [the river of the Underworld]. . . .' "

There is another poem,[10] too, which, though it does not name the beautiful Gongyla, may perhaps have reference to her, since Sappho is seen in it again to be hesitating, but to be arguing to herself that only pain will result if she withhold satisfaction from her desire. It reads:

"Oneiros, Dream-god, O child of dark night who comes back when morning is nigh and sleep has now but a brief time upon our eyelids!—O sweet god, how dreadful the suffering and distress you point out to me if I should dare to keep apart fulfilment [11] and longing! Still, I have the expectation that I shall have no portion in that of which you speak, but, rather, if the Blessed Ones offer it, shall by no means not grasp the thing longed for. After all, when I was a child I should never have been so unintelligent as to turn my back on a pretty plaything my dear mother held out to me; and I pray that the Blessed Ones but give me now the chance to take what I yearn for, seeing that I have done them all such honor in my poems and dances."

In this poem—which appears to be complete as to its length, though the manuscript is much mutilated—we are to see Sappho tossing in her sleep, disturbed by those waking dreams which only serve to remind her how agonizing is her yearning to love and be loved. She knows that she ought to endure the pain of holding back from the free expression of her longing; but she also knows herself, and, waking

[10] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1787, i, 15, restored by Edmonds.
[11] *Dunamis* is really the power or ability to accomplish something.

with a smile, she admits that she has no expectation of withstanding this new assault upon her emotions. Yet, with that curious innocence of heart which is so typical of her, whether it be actual or assumed, she compares her situation to that of a child whose wondering mind is intrigued by something new held out to it; but at the same time, in the one word *anoos,* "unintelligent," she pillories the attitude of those who forbear, and thus she loses all sight of childhood in an intellectual atmosphere into which it were better here not to penetrate. Twenty-five centuries later man is still asking the value of free expression, and still contemplates in perplexity the load he has to carry, not knowing whether to term it the profitable accumulation of the fruits of the tree of knowledge or the worthless burden of the rubbish of experience.

When Sappho had abandoned all pretense of resistance, she smiled to think that she had ever questioned the gifts of Aphrodite, and some lines of another poem, found in Egypt,[12] reveal her attitude:

> "Hither to me to-night, I urge you, come, Gongyla, rosebud, bringing your Lydian harp—O, how my longing ever flutters around your beauty! For the sight of your very dress itself thrills me, and I am happy. There was a time when I found fault with the Cyprus-born [Aphrodite]; but I pray that . . ."

Gongyla came, and in one more fragment of a poem which has made its tattered appearance for us out of the dust of Egypt,[13] Sappho pictures herself a few days later going with a servant or companion to the girl's house.

[12] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 15, restored by Hunt, Edmonds, and others.

[13] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 50.

". . . For you came to my house the other day and sang to me, and for that reason I am come. O, speak to me! Come down, and give me freely of your beauty; for we are out walking and are near, and well you know it. But as quickly as you can send your slavegirls away, and let the gods give me whatever they have for me. . . ."

Such is all that is now left to us of the story of Gongyla; but here, as suitably as anywhere else, I may record a few fragments of sentences from Sappho's verses gleaned from various ancient writers, which even in their brevity reveal the way that all love went for her:

"And I yearn and I seek to bring about . . ." [14]

". . . Because of my pain . . ." [15]

". . . And fall into forgetfulness of me . . . O, whom amongst men do you love better than me?" [16]

". . . You scorch me . . ." [17]

". . . To fold you in my arms, my beloved." [18]

"I know not what to do: I am in two minds." [19]

"Arise, my lute divine, and make thyself my voice." [20]

[14] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 485, 45.
[15] *Old Etymologicum Magnum* (Miller, p. 213).
[16] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 66, 3.
[17] Idem, 100, 5.
[18] Julian: *Epistolæ,* 18.
[19] Chrysippus, in Letronne: *Notices et Extraits,* col. 14, fr. 23.
[20] Hermogenes, in Walz's *Rhetorica Græca,* 3, 317.

In the end Sappho always turned to her music and her poetry, and through them unburdened her heart of its recurrent sorrows, thus making immortal that which was so very mortal. "Still breathes the love," wrote Horace, more than five hundred years later,[21] "still lives the flame which this Æolian girl committed to her strings"; and, says a certain Pinytos, "her words are deathless." [22] It was always a great satisfaction to her to realize that her work was appreciated; and even in the wretched scraps of her wonderful verse which have come down to us there are references to her consciousness of her genius.

"Some one, I tell you, will remember me hereafter," she wrote; [23] and:

". . . [The Muses] have made me honored by handing to me their own work . . ."

runs another fragment; [24] in which, however, the reference to the Muses in the lost beginning of the sentence is only to be inferred. But, being an artist, she was very conscious of the limitations and frustrations which ever vex the incarnate soul; and there is something of wistfulness in her words,

"Yet I could not expect to touch heaven with my two arms" [25]—

a beautiful sentence preserved because the word *oranos,* "heaven," happened to be under discussion by the grammarian Herodian. And when she published a collection of

[21] Horace: *Odes,* iv, 9, 11.
[22] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 16.
[23] Dion Chrysostom, xxxvii, 47.
[24] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 113, 8.
[25] Herodian, ii, 912, 10. (Lentz.)

her verses she entitled the book "Winged Words," and prefaced it thus:

"Of air are the words I begin, yet pleasurable"—

this title and opening sentence being inscribed upon an open book held in Sappho's hand in an Attic vase-painting dating from about a century or so after her death.[26]

There is, of course, no way of dating these emotional adventures in Sappho's life; but, for the purposes of our narrative, we may suppose another five years now to have passed, bringing us to about 575 B. C., when she was thirty-seven years of age. Already, perhaps, she had begun to dread the approaching end of that heyday of youth which meant so much to her; and a fragmentary line of hers which has been preserved in a papyrus of the first century A. D.[27]—

"Ah, girls, that I may escape wrinkles! For youth . . ."

is an indication of her troubled thoughts. She was restless, and at times she seems to have been exceedingly lonely, for there is a verse preserved by Hephæstion [28] because of its meter, which thus presents her to us:

"The moon has set, and the Pleiades [are gone]. It is midnight. Time passes; and yet I lie alone."

The verse is an instance of that simplicity of expression which yet expressed so much, and it is one of the most perfect and most haunting examples of her work that has survived.

Often she seems to have found the peaceful solitude of her working hours hard to endure; and another line quoted by

[26] Mus. Ital. Ant. Class. vi.
[27] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 220, 9.
[28] Hephæstion, 70.

Hephæstion [29] was evidently written in a mood of restless depression:

". . . Never, O Peace, have I found thee more irksome . . ."

And there was a time, once, in the spring, when she exclaimed: [30]

"Why does that daughter of Pandion, the heavenly swallow, weary me?"

Her life, however, was a busy one, and though it is evident that she was given to moods of deep depression, we must imagine her as more usually happy in her work and surrounded by her adoring *hetæræ* whose education in the arts and graces was her delight. An anonymous verse in the Greek Anthology [31] gives us a picture of her which is full of charm. It reads: "Come to the splendid temple-grounds [32] of Hera of the gleaming eyes,[33] you girls of Lesbos, and trip lightly in the whirling measure, performing a beautiful choral-dance for the goddess; and Sappho shall lead you, her golden lyre in her hand. So happy you will be in that delightful dance that you will imagine for sure that it is the sweet song of [the Muse] Calliope herself."

Sappho must often have led these choral-dances; and it is not difficult to conjure up an imaginary picture of them not too far removed from actuality; for the modern vogue of the Greek dance has accustomed us to the pleasant spectacle of breathless young women, clad in fluttering Greek

[29] Hephæstion, 69.
[30] Hephæstion, 72.
[31] *Palatine Anthology,* ix, 189.
[32] *Temenos.*
[33] *Glaukōpidos;* but perhaps *taurōpidos.*

garments, leaping and revolving barefooted upon the grass in a light-hearted enjoyment which occasionally approximates to the unaffected, Arcadian abandonment of ancient times. The figure of Sappho herself, however, and the rôle she played, are not so easy to picture; for there is nothing in our experience to aid us in giving a semblance of reality to this whirling, pirouetting little figure with the flying black hair, clasping her harp in her arms, and pausing every now and then to twang its strings and to sing her prepared or impromptu verses to the stamp of many small feet and the rhythmic clap of many hands. Suidas tells us, by the way, that she invented the plectrum or quill for striking the strings of the lyre so as to produce a louder sound; but I take it that all she did was to introduce the use of this article, for it had been employed in Egypt for centuries before this time, as the Theban tomb-paintings reveal.

In three lines of a poem of hers quoted by Hephæstion,[34] she gives us material by which to visualize such a dance. They read:

> "Thus of old, the dainty feet of Cretan girls used to dance in time with the music beside some beautiful altar, treading upon the smooth, soft sheen of the grass";

and the picture is vitalized by some lines in the Anthology [35] which speak of Mitylene as "the city of beautiful dances which lit the burning flame of Sappho's pleasures."

With her music and dancing, her inspirational poetry and her commissioned work, her days must have been busy enough; and yet one gathers the impression that she did not drive herself unduly, and allowed herself plenty of time to enjoy the entertainment which the gay life of Mitylene of-

[34] Hephæstion, 68 and 70.
[35] *Palatine Anthology*, vii, 718.

fered and the pleasant leisure which her wealth made possible. I have already referred to her love of nature, and Lesbos must have provided her with every opportunity to satisfy herself in this respect. The island was, and still is, a veritable paradise of gardens and natural beauties. The sun-baked little coves beside a tideless sea, with the trees growing down to the very edge of the water; the shady lanes, arched with the branches of mulberry-trees, and festooned with honeysuckle; the grassy pathways winding through the olive-groves where the air is scented with wild lavender and thyme, samphire and rosemary; the little torrents tumbling down the hillsides into fairylike glens amidst bowlders covered with maidenhair-fern and between banks ablaze with oleanders; the forests of chestnut-trees and oaks, and, higher up, of pines; the upland meadows carpeted in spring with a glory of wild-flowers; and, against the deep azure of the sky, the white-marble summit of the Lesbian Olympus—these features are by day an infinite enrichment of life's usual circumstances, and by night a million stars sparkling in the purple vault of the heavens bewitch the eyes and suspend the very breath in wonder, while if the moon be shining, there is a magic which becomes almost overwhelming in summer-time when the nightingales are singing and the air is perfumed with the scent of the flowers.

It is indeed most at night that in Lesbos the visitor seems to be aware of the spirit-presence of Sappho, wandering in woods and gardens, yearning for that true love which she sought in strange, unhallowed ways, but never found; and though twenty-five centuries have passed "we are not ignorant, you and I, of what she says,"—to use her own words —"for leafy Night of the many sounds speaks it to us through the space between," and forever we shall hear the voice of her wistful song singing in our hearts.

Chapter Seventeen

THE GREEKS IN EGYPT

IN 661 B. C., half a century before the birth of Sappho, venerable and ailing Egypt took on a new lease of life by reason of the accession to the throne of a very shrewd and businesslike King or Pharaoh, Psametek the First, a name which the Greeks rendered as Psammetichos.[1] The splendid days when Egypt was the mightiest kingdom in the world were long past; yet she was still one of the great Powers, and to the young states of the Ægean she was a land of ancient wisdom and unfathomable mystery, deriving even now strange and silent strength from unlimited resources both spiritual and material. The Pyramids had been built over two thousand years before this time; Sesostris and the mighty Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty, in whose day Joseph and the first Israelite settlers came into Egypt, had been dead for thirteen centuries; Tutankhamen, in whose reign the Hebrew exodus is said [2] to have taken place, had lain in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes for nearly seven hundred years; and for five and a half centuries the famous conqueror, Rameses the Great, had slept in that same silent valley.

In 713 B. C. an Ethiopian negro from far up the Nile made himself Pharaoh and was followed by three of his line; but Assyria was now the great power, and Ashurbanipal, the

[1] His reign as dated from the death of his father was from 663 B. C., but it is more correct to date it from the dethronement of his predecessor in 661 B. C.

[2] So the ancient Egyptian historian Manetho, according to Eusebius.

King of that country, invaded Egypt, and placed a friendly Egyptian prince named Neko upon the throne as his vassal. The defeated Ethiopians returned, however, and killed him; and in 661 B. C. the Assyrians again entered the country, sent the negroes flying, and gave the vassal crown to this Psametek, Neko's son. In 654 B. C. civil war broke out in Assyria itself, and Psametek took the opportunity to revolt, thereafter reigning as an independent monarch. Egypt, it seemed, was ultimately always unconquerable.

The first few years of Psametek's reign were troubled by the opposition of those who had remained loyal to Assyria, and there came a time when he was forced to fly to the marshes of Lower Egypt, near the sea; but having consulted the oracle in the ancient city of Buto, he was told that "men of bronze" would one day come from across the water, and that by their aid he would regain his throne.[3] Not long afterwards King Gyges of Lydia,[4] who had obtained the crown of that country in 687 B. C. entered into an arrangement with Psametek, by the terms of which he undertook to send some of his troops to Egypt to help the Pharaoh to maintain his independence against the Assyrians, who were also menacing Lydia at the other extreme of their empire.

The rumored despatch of this Lydian expedition led some of the Ionian Greeks from the cities along the western coast of Asia Minor, and the semi-Greek Carians from the hinterland behind Miletus, to fit out an expedition of their own, their object being to obtain remunerative employment under Psametek; but when these men disembarked on the shores of Egypt wearing their Greek armor, the Pharaoh realized that the oracle's "men of bronze" had come, and he at once engaged their services,[5] as no doubt the far-seeing

[3] Herodotus, ii, 152.

[4] Chapter Ten.

[5] My reading of these events is an attempt to reconcile the story of

statesmen who had inspired the oracle had wished him to do. Strabo [6] tells us that in the reign of Psammetichos—presumably this Psametek the First—a force of Greeks from Miletus arrived in Egypt in thirty ships, and built themselves a fortress in the western delta; and it would seem that he here refers to part of this same group of mercenaries.

Though these were probably the first Greek soldiers to come to Egypt, they were not the first Greeks to do so; for there is a reference [7] to Greek merchants who, in the Twenty-third Olympiad, 688 B. C., visited Naukratis, a town in Lower Egypt which afterwards became the famous Greek emporium, and, indeed, Hieronymus (whom we know better as St. Jerome) says [8] that Ionian Greeks from Miletus established a trading-station at Naukratis shortly after the end of the Seventh Olympiad, 749 B. C. As a matter of fact the evidence forthcoming from the modern excavations on the site of Naukratis [9] indicates that there was a Greek settlement here from somewhere about the Twenty-third Olympiad and possibly earlier; but however this may be, it seems that by the beginning of the reign of Psametek the adventurous Ionian merchants had already obtained a footing in Egypt, and Psametek must have heard all about the fighting qualities of their countrymen, their fine bronze armor and arms, and their discipline.

Any invading army from Assyria would have to approach Egypt from across the desert east of what is now the Suez

Herodotus (ii, 152) that Ionian and Carian mercenaries arrived by chance in Egypt as though in fulfilment of the prophecy, with the statement in the Annals of Ashurbanipal (iii, 28) that Gyges sent Lydian troops to Egypt to help Psametek against the Assyrians.

[6] Strabo, xvii, 801.

[7] Athenæus, xv, 18.

[8] Hieronymus, viii (Migne) p. 365.

[9] The evidence is well summed up in P. N. Ure: *Origin of Tyranny*, ch. iv.

Canal; and the main body of the Greek mercenaries was therefore placed at Daphnæ, the modern Defneh, a place on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, south of Lake Menzâla and some ten miles west of the modern Kantara, near Port Said. Here a great fortress was erected which still survives in ruins; [10] and its foundation-deposits inscribed with the name of Psametek, and thousands of fragments of contemporary Greek pottery, provide exact evidence of its date, and prove that it was the center of a great Greek military camp during the ensuing century.

The remainder of these Greeks troops were placed at Naukratis on the opposite side of Lower Egypt, the western side, on the Agathodæmon branch of the Nile, a few miles south of the city now called Damanhûr, and some twelve miles southwest of the city of Sais, which was then the capital of the country. A fortress similar to that at Daphnæ was erected here at Naukratis; [11] and from its battlements the sentries could look across the flat fields to Sais in the one direction, and in the other to the low hills of the western desert, the edge of which was but eight miles distant. Lower Egypt, I should explain, was formed by the Delta of the Nile, that is to say it was the wide, level area over which the great river—a single stream as far as Memphis and the modern Cairo—forked out into seven branches and so descended to the marshes and the sea, irrigating a vast triangle instead of the narrow valley through which it had come down from Ethiopia; and Naukratis was near the western side of this triangle, seventy-five miles northwest of Memphis, and some twenty-five southeast of Lake Mareotis, that shallow, marsh-bordered area of water separated from the sea by the spit of sand whereon the later Alexandria was built.

The presence of these Greek troops in Egypt led, of course,

[10] Petrie: *Tanis,* ii.
[11] Petrie: *Naukratis,* i.

to a sudden development of trade between the two peoples; and we read [12] that Psametek encouraged this trade, making it his business to see that the Greek ships never wanted for cargo, and, incidentally, collecting a huge personal fortune out of this commerce. He was keenly interested in these enterprising foreigners, and he did his best to open his country to them and to break down that ancient exclusiveness and reserve which had always characterized the Egyptians. He had this in common with the Ægean Greeks—the Ionian confederates, the Æolians of Lesbos and the mainland, and the other peoples of the eastern side of the Greek world—that both he and they were in danger of Assyrian aggression; and all efforts to hold the armies of the King of Assyria in check in Asia Minor or in Syria and eastern Egypt contributed to the same predominant purpose, the dispersing of this menace from the Orient. This was no time for Egypt to maintain her old, arrogant dislike of foreigners: she had known what it was to see her sacred soil trampled by Assyrian armies and her cities burnt; and now that Ægean Greeks, Lydians, and Carians had learned of her what to expect and were ready to fight the common enemy either in Asia Minor, or on the banks of the Nile, it was Psametek's obvious policy to allow them free access to Egypt, to pay them well for their military aid, and to strengthen the commercial ties between them.

Psametek reigned for fifty-four years, and a portrait of him made when he was advanced in age shows him to us as a long-nosed old gentleman, with drooping cheeks and a double chin, who looks like a prosperous and canny businessman. He was much respected by the Greeks, and some of them went so far as to call their sons Psammetichos after him, the name thus passing into usage in Greece, an instance of which is provided by the ruling house of Corinth,

[12] Diodorus, i, 66.

Periander's nephew and successor having been named Psammetichos. A large number of Egyptians, including the heir to the throne, learned to speak Greek; and I suppose nobody nowadays will deny that Egyptian painters, sculptors, architects and craftsmen profoundly influenced the artistic life of the Greek peoples of this time. Egyptian philosophical and religious thought began to filter through into Greece, and the Greeks themselves said that their music was derived from Egypt.[13]

Amongst the exports from the Nile which were popular in Greece particular mention may be made of the beautiful Egyptian linen and also the coarser material which was used for the making of sails; rolls of papyrus for writing purposes; perfumes; palm-oil; myrrh and incense from Arabia and Somaliland; panther-skins and ivory from Ethiopia; and the famous white wine from the vineyards around Naukratis and Lake Mareotis, this being bartered for the red wines of Lesbos, Chios, and elsewhere.

When Psametek died in 609 B. C., three years after the birth of Sappho, he was succeeded by his son Neko, a man of great energy who decided to revive the war against Assyria, itself now in difficulties, by invading Syria and carrying his standards as far northeast as the Euphrates. The expedition, in which the Greek mercenaries took part, is described in the Bible,[14] where we read that Josiah, who was king in Jerusalem and was loyal to Assyria, barred Neko's way, but was defeated and killed, whereupon his throne passed to his son Jehoahaz, who, however, was soon carried off to Egypt by Neko as a political prisoner, the Jewish crown being given to Jehoiakim, brother of the deposed monarch.

[13] Diodorus, i, 96. Herodotus, ii, 58. See also Plato's Second Book of Laws; Athenæus, iv, 83; Iamblichus: *Life of Pythagoras*, i, 25, 28, 29; etc.

[14] 2 Kings, xxiii, 29; 2 Chronicles, xxv, 20.

At the close of the campaign the victorious Egyptian king, realizing how much he owed to the splendid fighting qualities of the Ionian mercenaries, dedicated his armor to Apollo in his famous temple at Branchidæ, a little south of Miletus, where there was that oracle so greatly esteemed by the whole Ionian Confederacy.[15]

A few years later, however, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, having made an alliance with Media which led to the complete overthrow of Assyria, drove the Egyptians out of Syria and Palestine, as is related in the Book of Jeremiah; [16] and thereafter "the King of Egypt came not again any more out of his land," [17] his Greek mercenaries settling down to a quiet life in their headquarters at Daphnæ and Naukratis. Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar; Zedekiah, uncle of Jehoiakim, was given the vassal-throne; and between 598 and 596 B. C., when Sappho in Lesbos was just beginning to write poetry, the leading Jews were carried away into captivity, and Ezekiel, in exile by the waters of Babylon, began to pour out his soul in that great book of prophecy which is still to be read in our Bible.

Two great enterprises undertaken by Neko deserve to be mentioned here. Firstly, he made an attempt to reopen the canal by which the ancient Pharaohs had joined the Mediterranean and the Red Sea—the forerunner of the present Suez Canal; but after large numbers of workmen had lost their lives either owing to some epidemic or because of the mismanagement of the commissariat, he abandoned the undertaking, and the waterway was not successfully reopened until the time of Darius, a century later.[18] Secondly, he fitted out an expedition which had as its object the circumnaviga-

[15] Chapter Twelve.
[16] Jeremiah, xlvi.
[17] 2 Kings, xxiv, 7.
[18] Herodotus, ii, 158.

tion of Africa.[19] The ships sailed from some port in the Red Sea near Suez, and returned nearly three years later by way of the Straits of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean, having completed a voyage of over eight thousand miles.

Neko died in the year 594 B. C., and was succeeded by his son Psametek the Second; and it was during this reign that Sappho and her aristocratic friends were exiled from Lesbos. I have already said that nobody knows what became of the poet Alkaios, Sappho's admirer, during the years of their banishment; but as he states, in a lost poem mentioned by Strabo,[20] that he was at one time in Egypt, it is possible that he visited the Greek troops at Daphnæ or Naukratis and may even have taken service with them, just as his brother took service under the Babylonians.[21] These troops were employed by Psametek in an expedition up the Nile into Nubia; and at the temple of Abu Simbel, near the Second Cataract, inscriptions are still to be seen cut by them upon the legs of the great colossi in the early Greek letters of this period. Ionians from the cities of Teos and Kolophon are amongst those who have left their names; [22] and as there were Greeks amongst them from places outside the Ionian Confederacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of Sappho's friends in exile also took part in this expedition. Indeed, there is a poem by Alkaios [23] in which he speaks of the intense heat of the season when the Dog Star, Sirius, is seen in the sky, and tells how men are parched with thirst, thin, and weak at the knees—conditions which are hardly applicable to breezy Lesbos, but which well describe those of Nubia and Upper Egypt, where, moreover, the calendar

[19] Herodotus, iv, 42.
[20] Strabo, i, 37.
[21] Chapter Six.
[22] Weigall: *A Guide to the Antiquities of Upper Egypt*, p. 568.
[23] Proclus: *Commentary on Hesiod's "Works and Days,"* 584.

was based on the movements of Sirius. It is not at all unlikely, therefore, that this poem was written during this Nubian expedition.

Meanwhile, the brother of Alkaios, Antimenidas, who, in these days of his banishment, had chosen to throw in his lot with the Greek mercenaries in the pay of Nebuchadnezzar, probably found himself campaigning in Palestine; for in the year 589 B. C. the Jewish King, Zedekiah, revolted against the Babylonians, and Nebuchadnezzar once more visited Jerusalem with fire and sword, and in 588 B. C. carried away another batch of Jews in what is known as the Second Captivity. There is a quotation from a poem by Alkaios, preserved by Hephæstion,[24] which was written to this brother of his, after Pittakos had allowed the exiles to come back to Lesbos; and in it the poet welcomes the return of Antimenidas, and records the fact that, while fighting for the Babylonians, he, Antimenidas, had killed in single combat an enemy-champion of gigantic size, and had brought home as a trophy the fallen warrior's sword, of which the hilt was made of ivory inlaid with gold. In another fragment,[25] of which only the ends of two lines survive, Alkaios says something about ". . . sacred Babylon" and ". . . Ascalon"; and as Ascalon was a place on the coast of Palestine, about forty miles from Jerusalem, it may be that we have here an indication that Antimenidas actually took part in this attack upon the Holy City.

In 588 B. C. Psametek the Second died and was succeeded on the Egyptian throne by his son Hoibre, whose name is rendered Hophra in the Bible and Apries by the Greeks. In 586 B. C. he led his army, including his Greek mercenaries, into Palestine, but had to retire before the superior strength of Nebuchadnezzar's army of Babylonians and Greeks; and

[24] Hephæstion, 63; Strabo, xiii, 617.
[25] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1233, II, 10.

it is not improbable that there was a time when Alkaios and his brother, serving on opposite sides, faced one another across the rugged valleys in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar then destroyed the Jewish capital for the third time; the wretched Zedekiah was blinded after being compelled to witness the execution of his sons;[26] and in 584 B. C. most of the surviving Jewish families of importance were taken away to Babylon in the Third Captivity. The prophet Jeremiah, however, together with several Jewish nobles and two or three of the princesses of the royal house, made their way to Egypt, and took refuge with the Greek troops in the fortress of Daphnæ (a name rendered in the Bible Tahpanhes or Tehaphnehes[27]); and it is interesting to find that, apparently on this account, Daphnæ is called by the Egyptians to this day *Kasr Bint el Yehudi,* "the Fortress of the Jew's Daughter." It is within the bounds of possibility, thus, that Alkaios came into personal contact with Jeremiah at Daphnæ, while Antimenidas may have seen him in Palestine, where orders had been issued that he was not to be harmed,[28] his depressing prophecies being regarded by the enemy as most valuable to their cause; and stories of the plight of these Jewish refugees may perhaps have been told in after years in Sappho's house in Lesbos—a possibility which I mention, however, only because it helps to give a place to Sappho's period in that hazy panorama of far antiquity which serves most of us as a background to what we know of less remote history. Yet to link the sophisticated Sappho in this manner with Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the other seemingly preternatural figures out of the Bible, whose names have been rendered prodigious by our childhood's pieties, requires a mental effort which the reader may find it diffi-

[26] Jeremiah, xxxix, 6, 7.
[27] Jeremiah, xliii, 6, 7.
[28] Jeremiah, xxxix, 12.

A GROUP OF FEMALE FIGURES, ILLUSTRATING THE COSTUMES OF THE PERIOD, BASED ON EARLY VASE-PAINTINGS

KING PSAMETEK OF EGYPT

FROM A BAS RELIEF IN THE
BRITISH MUSEUM

Berlin

BRONZE STATUETTE OF A GREEK
SOLDIER

cult to make; and I will therefore pass on to the narration of events which brought Sappho into direct connection with Egypt through circumstances of a more ordinary kind.

It was in the time of Hoibre that Solon of Athens paid a visit to Egypt; but of this I will speak in a subsequent chapter. The reign carries us beyond those years in Sappho's life with which we have been dealing in the previous chapter, and brings us to 569 B. C., when the age of the poetess was forty-three and the days of her youth were gone. At this time Hoibre was approached by envoys from the Libyans inhabiting the great tract of country west of Egypt, who brought a pitiful tale of the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the Greek settlers at Cyrene upon their seacoast. This colony had been founded in 631 B. C. by Dorian Greeks from the island of Thera in the southern Ægean, north of Crete; but under their King, Battos the Happy, their numbers had been greatly increased by new colonists from various parts of Greece, and it seems to have been the providing of land for these new arrivals which had aroused the dispossessed Libyans to anger. Hoibre, seeing an opportunity to extend his sway over this territory, sent an Egyptian army across the western desert to attack Cyrene; but the Greek colonists ambushed and destroyed the invading force, and the few survivors who returned to Egypt spread the report that Hoibre had purposely sent them to their doom, being afraid of the political power of his military officers.

A great rebellion followed, and at this Hoibre sent one of his generals, a self-made man named Ahmose, whom the Greeks called Amasis, to treat with the rebels; but on his arrival at their headquarters they promptly invited him to seize the throne with their aid, and before he had time to consider the matter they clapped a royal helmet on his head and hailed him as Pharaoh. Hoibre thereupon sent another officer of high standing with orders to Ahmose to come back

at once to the capital; but the usurper, who had now entered into the spirit of the adventure, received the message with a laugh, and by way of reply made a certain unpleasant noise with his lips and said, "Take *that* back to your master." [29] But when the unfortunate envoy faithfully delivered this expressive answer to Hoibre, the monarch was thrown by the vulgar noise into such a paroxysm of rage that he ordered the man's nose and ears cut off there and then, in spite of his rank. The spectacle, however, of a popular officer going about without a nose caused such general consternation that at length Hoibre found himself deserted by all except his Greek mercenaries, the force at hand in the capital or in the neighboring depot at Naukratis being some thirty thousand strong.

The rebel army under Ahmose was of great size, and when a pitched battle was fought between the two parties at a place called Momemphis on the edge of the western desert, the Greeks were routed and Hoibre was taken prisoner. The fallen monarch, however, was allowed to retain his crown, but only as joint-sovereign with Ahmose, the latter reigning as actual Pharaoh and Hoibre as a nominal partner. A little over two years later, in 567 B. C., Hoibre attempted to shake himself free, and once more offered battle at the head of the Greek mercenaries; but he was again defeated, and was strangled while sleeping in his cabin aboard a boat on which he was attempting to escape.[30]

Thanks to Herodotus we know something of the character of Ahmose, whom he represents as a vulgar man of no ancestry [31] but of much political ability. Before he attained

[29] Herodotus, ii, 161.

[30] Herodotus ii, 169; and Breasted: *Records,* iv, 999 ff. The two accounts, the Greek and the Egyptian, differ slightly.

[31] The indications, gleaned from native inscriptions, that he was of distinguished family, are not convincing.

the throne he had led a life of much intemperance, often getting drunk and, with his wild friends, making raids on other people's property which brought him before the magistrates; and though he usually managed to buy or lie his way out of these scrapes, his reputation was bad. After he became king he gave only his mornings to the transaction of business, and during the rest of the day he ate and drank and otherwise amused himself with such freedom that at last his supporters protested against his behavior, saying that he was forfeiting his people's respect. To this he replied, however, that just as the archer unstrings his bow when it is not in use, so a man must needs relax when his day's business is done; and he declared that he saw no reason why his subjects should respect him the less because he behaved like an ordinary human being. In the palace of his predecessor he had found a utensil, made of pure gold, which was used for certain purposes in the bedroom, and, deeming this an unnecessary extravagance, he had caused it to be melted down and made into a statuette of one of the gods; but when he observed the people bowing before this figure, he reminded them of the article out of which it had been made, and drew a comparison between it and himself: he, too, had been exalted from low estate, he said, but now that he was Pharaoh he demanded reverence and respect, no matter what his origin or what the real character of his mortal clay might be.

He found himself in considerable difficulty in regard to the Greeks, who were in bad odor because of their support of the late monarch, and whose prestige had suffered by their defeat in battle. There was a wave of anti-foreign feeling in the country, and Greek merchants were evidently being insulted or boycotted in the cities and villages. In spite of this, however, Ahmose permitted himself to fall in love with a beautiful Greek lady named Ladike, the daughter of a personage of high rank in the colony of Cyrene, who had

perhaps come with her father to Egypt upon some political mission. The new Pharaoh appears to have been a widower at this time, and he now boldly announced his intention of marrying her, whether his subjects liked it or not; but the marriage was marred by an incident which nearly cost the lady her life. Ahmose, it appears, was not so much at his ease with women as he was in the company of his rowdy male friends; and on the night of his wedding he was suddenly overcome by an attack of nervousness or shyness in the presence of his chaste and beautiful foreign bride, and found himself quite incapable of behaving as an ardent bridegroom should.

In his astonishment and chagrin—for, as Herodotus says,[32] he had never before been afflicted in this manner—he accused Ladike of having bewitched him, and told her he would have her put to death: in which we may perhaps see the machinations of his Egyptian friends who were opposed to this Greek marriage; and thereupon his bride supplicated Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, vowing to dedicate a statue to her if only she would put matters to rights. The prayer was heard, and next day Ahmose was himself again, nor was he ever again anything but her stalwart lover. Herodotus says that he himself saw the promised statue in the temple of Aphrôdite at Cyrene.

The outcry against the Greeks continued; and Ahmose decided, therefore, to restrict their movements in Egypt, giving their merchants what we should now call a treaty-port, and confining both them and such Greek troops as he thought it wise to retain to that place. For this purpose he selected Naukratis, the old headquarters of the mercenaries, for it was but a few miles from his capital, Sais, in the heart of Lower Egypt, and yet all merchandise from across the sea could be brought to it by ship by way of the Canopic

[32] Herodotus, ii, 181.

mouth of the Nile. He then authorized the Greeks to rebuild Naukratis after their own fashion, and very quickly a purely Greek city came into being here amidst the palms of Egypt.

One of the first buildings to be erected was a center known as the Hellenion, a group of buildings standing in a large enclosure; and Herodotus [33] records the fact that it was erected at the joint expense of the Æolians from Mitylene in Lesbos, the Ionians from the confederate cities of Chios, Teos, Phokæa, and Klazomenæ,[34] and the Dorians from Rhodes, Knidos (Cnidus), Halicarnassus, and Phaselis. At the same time the people of Miletus built a temple to Apollo, those of Samos erected a temple to Hera, and the Greeks of the island of Ægina, near Athens, set up a temple to Zeus. Other public buildings sprang into existence; and the villas of the merchants, their warehouses and offices, the shops and hotels, soon grouped themselves into a maze of houses and streets, protected by the fortress which the mercenaries, their own countrymen, still used as their depot.

Twice a year, Herodotus tells us,[35] ships arrived at Naukratis from all parts of Greece and the Ægean, bringing the various kinds of Greek wine to be sold to the settlers, the soldiers, and the native Egyptians alike. It was a lucrative business, and the wine-merchants of countries such as Lesbos, where the vintages were famous, were wealthy men. Now one of the chief wine-merchants of Mitylene was Charaxos, Sappho's brother; and it was when he had come to Naukratis with a cargo of Lesbian wine,[36] somewhere about the year 566 B. C., that he met the woman who was to become Sappho's sister-in-law and the object of her bitterest enmity.

[33] Herodotus, ii, 178.
[34] Chapter Twelve.
[35] Herodotus, iii, 6.
[36] Strabo, xvii, 808.

Chapter Eighteen

SAPPHO AND RHODOPIS THE COURTESAN

IN speaking of the island of Samos [1] I referred to a young slave-girl from Thrace whose name was Doricha, but whose fair complexion and beauty had earned, or was to earn, her the nickname of Rhodopis, "the Rose-like." At the time of Sappho's supposed visit to Samos—in about 580 B. C., that is to say—Doricha was owned by a certain Samian called Iadmon, it will be recalled, and was the fellow-slave of Æsop; but when she was still young Iadmon sold her to another Samian, Xanthes by name, whose business took him sometimes across the sea to Egypt. This personage thought that he might make money by taking the girl over to Naukratis and hiring her out as a prostitute, the Greek military officers stationed there being his prospective customers, though he had in mind also, no doubt, the wealthy Egyptians of the neighboring city of Sais, and, indeed, in his admiration of the girl's beauty, his hopes may have carried him to the private door of the palace of the Pharaoh of Egypt himself. At this time Doricha, one may suppose, was about sixteen years of age; and in due course she found herself established at Naukratis, which was then, as has been pointed out, nothing more than a military depot.[2]

In the year 566 B. C., when, as related in the preceding chapter, the Pharoah Ahmose had concentrated all the Greeks in

[1] Chapter Eleven.

[2] Herodotus ii, 134, for the above details.

this one center, Doricha-Rhodopis must have been nearly thirty years of age,[8] and had become so famous for her beauty and so successful in her profession that she must have been a mine of gold to Xanthes, her owner, who, no doubt, congratulated himself heartily on his acumen in having purchased her from Iadmon. A slave, it should be understood, was to his or her master what a race-horse is to its owner to-day: he could collect the slave's gains and earnings, in whatsoever way they were acquired, and was not thought the less of for doing so. An owner would sometimes cause his slaves to be taught various handicrafts or arts or skilled professions, and would make a great deal of money by hiring them out. Female slaves were often trained as flute-players, singers, or dancing-girls; and since it was quite understood that such public entertainers should, when required, end their day's work in other and more private efforts to please, there could be no reproach attached to hiring them out for the latter purpose only. Respectability is so elastic a quality that habit and custom can stretch it in any direction almost to any length, and it is no more surprising to find in ancient Greece a highly esteemed merchant making money out of one of his slave's physical attractions than it is to see to-day a theatrical manager, for instance, taking part of the salary of one of his artistes who is performing for another management. It may be supposed that Xanthes permitted this particular lady to accumulate considerable property of her own; for I do not think it would have been considered fair on his part to have refused her his permission to retain possession of some of the gifts presented to her by her lovers, and, indeed, during his absences from Naukratis

[8] Her age is quite uncertain, of course, but as she had been the fellow-slave of Æsop, who was probably born about 620 B. C. and made free in later life, it is not likely that she was now much less than thirty.

she would doubtless have had opportunities of acquiring a nest-egg for herself of which he knew nothing. At any rate, it may be supposed that she was now a woman of apparent wealth, leading a life of great luxury in an establishment of her own, Xanthes being a dark figure in the background, taking his toll of her gains, but ready to allow her, by the aid of any rich lover, to purchase her freedom from him should she ever be able to offer him his price.

Charaxos, Sappho's brother, must have been a man of about forty-four years of age at this time, Sappho herself being forty-six; and he is described as a refined, elegant [4] personage, a man of taste and culture, who had made a large fortune in the wine-trade, but was sufficiently hardy and enterprising to conduct his own business and to come himself each year to Egypt with his fleet of wine-laden ships. The voyage from Lesbos to Naukratis was in itself an adventure; for though the first part of the journey was but a winding, pleasurable cruise of some four hundred miles amidst the Ægean islands down to Crete, during which the land was never out of sight by day and there was never a distance of more than thirty miles between one shore and another, the second stage of the voyage necessitated the crossing of some two hundred miles of open sea, between Crete and North Africa, after which the three hundred miles' run eastwards along the barren desert coast to the Canopic mouth of the Nile was fraught with dangers from lack of water or from attack by Libyan tribesmen when a landing at a known well was necessary.

The ships, however, were of fair size, and there was a large crew to man the oars when there was no wind to fill the square sail. The average speed of a merchant vessel

[4] Athenæus, xiii, 69. The epithet is *charieis*, which has the sense of "refined" rather than "beautiful."

was about five knots,[5] and the whole journey from Mitylene to Naukratis, allowing for the nights at anchor, must have taken anything from a fortnight to three weeks, with one spell of two days and two nights on the open sea. Thus the voyage was always a lengthy and rather trying business, not without considerable danger, although it was never undertaken except during the five best months of the year; and Charaxos is therefore to be imagined as a man of courage and purpose.

Nothing is known of the character of Doricha-Rhodopis, except that she knew how to extract money without pain, so to speak, and that, as is often the case with the very carnally minded, she ultimately became extremely apprehensive about the disappearance of her soul, and dedicated a tenth of her fortune to the temple at Delphi; [6] but the evidence indicates that she was at this time bent upon obtaining her freedom, and when she met Charaxos and became his mistress it seems clear that she saw in his riches the possible means of her escape from Xanthes and from her galling slave-status. The affair between them was lifted into the realm of romance by his honest devotion to her; and although there is nothing actually to indicate that she responded to his passion with genuine love, there is equally nothing to suggest that she did not do so, for even a courtesan, accustomed for years to share her bed with the officers of a garrison, may in the end be overwhelmed by the ill-used Eros. All we know is that when Charaxos arrived back in Lesbos after those enchanted summer days in the shade of the palms of Naukratis, and those more magical nights be-

[5] Apollonius Rhodius, i, 601 ff; Herodotus, iv, 86; Thucydides, ii, 97; etc.

[6] Herodotus, ii, 135; but compare this and Strabo xvii, 808, with Athenæus, xiii, 69.

neath the Egyptian stars, he was a man who lived only for his return to her bosom with sufficient money to buy her freedom from Xanthes and to make her his wife.

Sappho, who must have heard all about his infatuation from his friends, if not from his own lips, was distracted. She saw Doricha only as a designing woman, ready to fleece her brother of his money—a common slave, moreover, unfit to marry into the Lesbian aristocracy; and in the bitterness of her heart she wrote a poem to Charaxos—at least, one may suppose it was addressed to him—of which these words have survived: [7]

> ". . . with whom in a vagrant love you are united, and suppose that to be beautiful which is public property. . . ."

But the lover knew that it was not his beloved's fault that her charms had thus been public in Naukratis, and Sappho's warnings and rebukes meant nothing to him.

When the time came for him to return to Egypt there was a violent scene between him and his sister in which each made accusations against the other, and flung taunts which could not be forgotten. Sappho's life was peculiarly open to criticism, and it would seem that she, rather than he, was to be termed vagrant in the affairs of her heart, nor had middle age quenched the burning passion of her wayward amours —as we shall presently see; and it may well be believed that in this quarrel she received more hurt than she gave. She must have writhed at the thought that this "rose-like," beautiful creature in far-off Egypt would even now be smiling in triumph at the expectation of the renewal of the affair with all its possibilities of wealth and freedom; and it was

[7] Eustathius: *Opuscula,* 345, 52. The word here translated "vagrant" is *polurembastos.*

evidently in this frame of mind that she wrote a poem to Aphrodite, Lady of Cyprus, of which this fragment has been recovered: [8]

". . . O Lady of Cyprus, even thee may she find too bitter, nor boast so loudly, saying to herself, 'Into what a desirable love-affair has Doricha this second time come back!' "

When Charaxos reached Naukratis once more he proved his devotion by spending his money lavishly upon the object of his love; [9] and at length, having managed to come to terms with Xanthes, "he bought her freedom at a great price," as Herodotus says.[10] Not long afterwards he made her his wife; [11] but it is not known whether or not he brought her back to Lesbos with him when this second summer of his madness was over.

Meanwhile in Mitylene Sappho awaited his return in great anxiety, hoping that he had recovered from his infatuation and that he would make his peace with her. The following poem [12] written by her at this time is dedicated to the Nereids, the nymphs of the sea:

"Golden Nereids, grant me my brother's safe return, I beseech you, that his heart's [true] desire may be fulfilled, and that, undoing in every way his former mistakes, he may become a joy to his friends and a sorrow to his enemies, so that we may be shamed before no man. And his sister may he desire to hold in due honor; and the sore distress and the words with which at his

[8] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 1, 1.
[9] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, 1, 1.
[10] Herodotus, ii, 135.
[11] Suidas.
[12] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 7. Restored by Edmonds and others.

departure he sought in his pain to overpower my heart, being cut to the quick by my reproaches—amidst his fellow-countrymen's gayeties may he choose to cast them lightly away, when he shall come back on some not distant day, and find a wife, if he desire one, among decent young women. But as for you, you obscene and evil bitch, with your nose set to the ground, may you go off [hunting] elsewhere!"

From this prayer, with its unexpectedly violent close, we obtain a considerable insight into Sappho's character. She was now getting on in years, and, being anxious to stand in good repute, hated to be shamed by a slave-marriage. Her view was aristocratic and, indeed, conventional in this matter of social dignity; and she was not above desiring that her brother should subordinate romance to decorum and should be, as she says, a joy to his friends and a sorrow to his enemies. It is a little disappointing; and yet we must remember that a sisterly jealousy was probably at the root of her anger. At any rate the last sentence, being so human, brings her before us very vividly as a personality, and reveals that personality as essentially feminine.

When Charaxos arrived back in Lesbos, however, and Sappho heard the news that he had married this woman whom she so much detested, her anger may be imagined. Herodotus tells us [13] that the poetess attacked him bitterly in her now lost verses, in which, we learn elsewhere,[14] she accused Doricha of having robbed her poor brother of all his money; and we are left to suppose that the quarrel between brother and sister was never put to rights—a situation which, in fact, Ovid makes clear.[15]

[13] Herodotus, ii, 135.
[14] Athenæus, xiii, 69.
[15] Chapter Twenty-three.

The end of the story is not known. It may be that Doricha failed to hold his love, or he to retain hers: at any rate, we read that she resumed her career as a courtesan and in so doing accumulated vast wealth. Glamorous tales of her beauty and profligacy gathered about her, and centuries after her day she was remembered as a brilliant figure, the heroine of many legends. Strabo,[16] for instance, records the Cinderella-like story that once when she was bathing an eagle plucked one of her little sandals from the hands of her slave-girl and carried it to Memphis, where it fell into the lap of the Pharaoh, who, at the time, was administering justice in the open. The monarch thereupon sent messengers about the country in search of the owner of the sandal, and at last she was found at Naukratis and was brought to the royal palace, where the Pharaoh became her lover.

Her name, Rhodopis, was confused with that of the earlier Egyptian Queen Nitokris whom Manetho, the ancient Egyptian historian, describes as having been "beautiful, fair-complexioned, and rose-like"; and since this Nitokris was afterwards thought, erroneously, to have built the Third Pyramid, that mighty monument came in time to be called the tomb of this courtesan who was Sappho's sister-in-law, a mistake which Herodotus is at pains to expose. Developing out of this fallacy, the story began to circulate that this pyramid was haunted by the ghost of a beautiful, naked woman; and in the middle ages the Arab historian, Al-Murtadi, wrote that many people had seen the apparition. Sometimes, he said, she appeared to some passing man, and smiled at him so sweetly that he approached her, whereupon she would draw him to her and so infatuate him that he would lose his senses and wander after her into the desert and be lost.[17]

[16] Strabo, xvii, 808.

[17] See my *History of the Pharaohs,* I, *ch.* ix.

An interesting point is to be noticed in connection with her pious gift to the temple at Delphi. Herodotus states that this gift consisted of "a quantity of iron spits, such as are fit for roasting oxen whole," and he says that he himself saw them at Delphi lying in a heap behind the altar. Now in the time of Doricha iron was a valuable metal, and in Sparta and elsewhere heavy rods of iron were used as money currency, and bundles of them, about four feet long, have been found in modern excavations.[18] A rod of this kind was called *obeliskos,* whence came the name of the coin *obol;* but the word really meant a "spit" or "shaft," and also that slender pillar of stone, the obelisk, which was so often seen in Egyptian temples, and which had its origin in phallic symbolism, the native word for it having both meanings.[19] Thus *obeliskos* was a word with a decided significance; and it is possible that Doricha's strange gift was not made altogether without the consciousness that it was one appropriate to her profession.

Delphi, I should explain, was regarded by the Greeks as the geographical center of the world, "the earth's navel," as they called it, and also as the chief religious shrine of Greece. It was situated amidst towering heights and tremendous precipices on the awe-inspiring slopes of Parnassus, fifty miles northeast of Corinth, a hundred and eighty miles east of Lesbos, and some six hundred miles northeast of the Egyptian coast. Here was the famous oracle of Apollo which was consulted not only by the Greeks, but by Lydian, Egyptian, and other foreigners; and the gifts made to its treasuries were accumulating year by year into a fabulous hoard of riches. The oracles in early times were delivered by

[18] De Cou: *Argive Heræum,* pls CXXVII ff.

[19] The Egyptian word is *ben,* sometimes written *bel,* an obelisk *or* the male organ; and this is related to the Greek *belos,* "a shaft," which, again, is the basis of *obeliskos.*

a young girl chosen from some local family, and thereafter called the Pythia, who, under the influence of some form of intoxication, uttered words or sounds which were interpreted by the priests as they thought fit and were put by them into hexameter verse. In later times an older woman was employed, and it is stated by Pausanias and others that she was made to inhale the fumes rising from a cleft in the rock in order to produce the necessary delirium; but there is no early evidence for this. In about 586 B. C., I may add, when Sappho was still a young woman, the Pythian Games were established at Delphi, somewhat on the model of the much older Olympian Games; and these were attended by Greeks from all over the Grecian world.

Sappho's attack upon Doricha does not seem to have damaged her in the eyes of antiquity, for classical authors usually had a warm place in their hearts for any celebrated courtesan, as, indeed, have those of to-day also. Athenæus [20] tells us that the Athenian Poseidippos, who was writing in the third century B. C., frequently spoke of her in his works, and that it was he who composed the following sympathetic epigram about her, with which, for want of more material, this account of her may be concluded. "Doricha," he wrote, "it is but your bones that are now adorned by that band for your soft, long hair, and that mantle breathing perfume in which you enfolded the elegant Charaxos clasped close with you till you drank together the morning cup. But still the white, articulate pages of Sappho's beloved poetry abide and shall abide forever; and thus enviable is your name, and one which Naukratis will keep in mind so long as a sea-going ship shall sail up amidst the sandbanks of the Nile."

[20] Athenæus, xiii, 69.

Chapter Nineteen

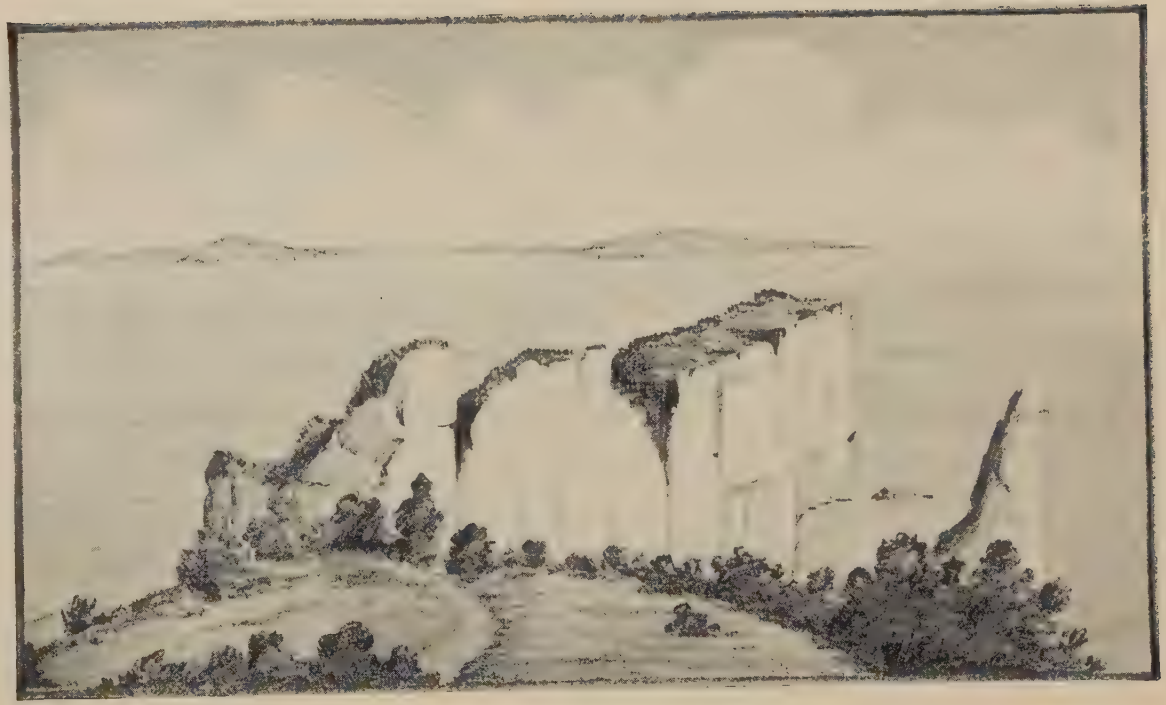
THE DEATH OF PITTAKOS OF LESBOS, AND THE TRAVELS OF SOLON OF ATHENS

MY reasons for dating the affair of Charaxos and Doricha-Rhodopis to about the year 566 B. C. ought perhaps to be stated. Herodotus tells us that Rhodopis attained her celebrity in the reign of the Pharaoh Ahmose or Amasis, who came to the throne in 569 B. C. It was this monarch who concentrated the Greek merchants at Naukratis, to which city Charaxos is stated to have gone with his shipment of wine; but this concentration does not appear to have become effective until the third year of the reign, when the preceding Pharaoh was finally disposed of. It is quite possible, of course, that Charaxos went to Naukratis some years before this date, when the place was only a military depot; but in this case Rhodopis would probably not have been placed by Herodotus so definitely in the reign of Amasis. On the other hand it is not likely that the affair took place later than 566 B. C.; for even if we omit as unconvincing the first argument which presents itself to the mind, namely, that Charaxos would then have been rather too elderly to have been so ardent a lover, the point has to be considered that Rhodopis in that case could hardly have once been the fellow-slave of Æsop, who seems to have obtained his freedom considerably earlier than this, since he was already at the height of his fame in the Fifty-second Olympiad, 572 B. C.[1] Of course there can be no certainty in such specula-

[1] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Chilon.*

Acropolis Museum, Athens

A STATUE OF ABOUT THE TIME OF SAPPHO, FROM THE ACROPOLIS, ATHENS



THE LEUCADIAN PROMONTORY, LOOKING SOUTH TOWARDS CEPHALLENIA AND ITHACA

tions; and all that can be said is that my dating best fits the probabilities of the matter.

In carrying the story forward to this year 566 B. C., however, one important landmark has been overshot, namely, the death of Pittakos, the retired Tyrant of Lesbos. It will be remembered that when he resigned his office in 580 B. C., he passed into private life, and although he seems to have paid a visit to the neighboring kingdom of Lydia, his time appears to have been spent chiefly upon his estate near Mitylene which had been presented to him by the citizens. In his declining years his reputation for wisdom greatly developed, and his thoughtful words were treasured and circulated until their author came to be regarded at last as one of the Seven Wise Men of the age.

I have already mentioned some of these sayings of his in a previous chapter [2]—his insistence, for example, that one should not speak evil even of one's enemies, this being a standpoint which marks a great advance in ethics, and puts him far above his excitable detractor, Alkaios, who used to pour such abuse upon him and that aristocratic old harridan, his wife. Yet Pittakos had a very poor opinion of his fellow men, and once remarked that, however far one might seek, a virtuous person would not be found, for "it is very hard," he declared, "to be a really good man." "You need to go against a dishonest man," he said, "with your bow and a quiver full of arrows; for the tongue of him who has a double-voiced thought in his heart tells only lies." His advice to all was to "cultivate truth, good-faith, experience, brains, good-comradeship, and hard work"; and though, as he declared, "brave men make the best of existing circumstances," he often used to say, "Watch your opportunity!"

A curiously interesting remark of his was that "it is the

[2] Chapter Six. These sayings are recorded by Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Pittakos*.

part of a wise man before difficulties arise to provide for their not arising," but it is a question whether his meaning was merely that one should endeavor to prevent a menace from taking shape, or whether he meant that in concentrating on the prevention of a particular danger one should not lose sight of normal affairs. "Even the gods," he said, "cannot fight Necessity." And another profound saying of his was that "power reveals the man." During his visit to Lydia, Crœsus asked him what he regarded as the greatest power on earth; and he replied, "The Power of the Tables of the Law," meaning to say, I suppose, that the quality of being law-abiding was the source of the greatest strength in a people. As a matter of policy he advised his friends never to announce beforehand what they were going to do, lest if they should fail they would be laughed at; and he used to say, "Do not taunt a man with his misfortunes, lest Nemesis overtake you." "Practise piety," he said, "together with moderation." And once when he was asked what was the golden rule of life, he replied, "To do well whatever one is doing at the moment."

The life of this rough, unkempt old soldier and statesman was so different from that of the brilliant and luxury-loving Sappho that one wonders whether they were ever on friendly terms, or whether they turned their faces from one another when they met, as often they must have done, in the streets of little Mitylene. Yet there can be no doubt that Pittakos won the respect of his countrymen, in spite of his indifference to the airs and graces of fashionable life which were then so much in vogue; and when he died it is said that "Lesbos buried him with tears."

We must turn back now to put ourselves in touch once more with the adventurous career of Sappho's admirer, Solon of Athens, whom we last saw when he was instituting

new laws in his native city.[3] His was a temperament more likely to be in harmony with that of the poetess, for it will be recalled that in his early manhood he had been a writer of love-poems, and had lived the life of the fashionable young men of the time, enjoying its refinements and participating in its queer moral behavior. For many years he had been devoted to his young cousin, Pisistratos, in those days a youth of exceptional beauty; but that romantic affair—so typical of the period that the historian needs make no comment upon it—was long since past, and age and hard work had brought under control the agitation of his sentient nature.

In the year 572 B. C., when Solon was sixty-six, he decided to retire, like Pittakos, into private life, and, leaving Athens to digest his new laws, to set out in quest of more knowledge. He made his way, first, to Egypt,[4] where the Pharaoh Hoibre was on the throne, and where the presence of the Greek mercenary troops had opened the country to the Greek traders. For some time he resided at Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, now a suburb of modern Cairo; and there he studied the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians under a priest named Psenophis. He stayed also in the royal capital, Sais, and there studied with a certain Sonchis,[5] who is said to have been the most learned of the priests; and later he took up his residence at an unnamed place near the Canopic mouth of the Nile.

An interesting fact may here be recorded. Plato and Plutarch tell us that from this Sonchis Solon obtained knowledge of the story of Atlantis, and put it into a poem with the idea of making the Greeks acquainted with it. This strange

[3] Chapter Five.

[4] Plutarch: *Solon.*

[5] I am unable to identify these Grecised names from Egyptian sources, and their native form remains a matter for speculation. Sonchis suggests the Egyptian *Se-enkh.*

tale of a sunken continent, which has exercised the minds of scholars ever since Plato gave it to the world in his *Timaeus* and *Critias,* was thus an Egyptian legend. Atlantis was said to have been an enormous island, as big as Libya and Asia Minor put together, situated somewhere west of the Pillars of Hercules or Straits of Gibraltar; but after its almost celestial inhabitants had waged war on the rest of mankind and had fallen from their pristine perfection into evil ways, their beautiful country was swallowed by the sea. This catastrophe was believed to have taken place in the far past, at a date which people then placed at nine thousand years before their time, a calculation which to Egyptian ideas would mean that it had taken place at the close of the age of the gods, just before human kings had begun to rule on earth.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the Land of the Blest was a beautiful country lying behind the western horizon into which the sun sank each evening; but when the explorers of early Greek times had discovered that there was an ocean beyond the western shores of Africa, the imagined situation of these Elysian Fields had, of course, to be pushed back beyond that ocean. But the mariners of those days—such as those who sailed round Africa in the reign of Neko [6]—could have known of no such islands in the sea, except the Canaries or Fortunate Islands, which did not tally in size or any other features with the great and glorious kingdom of the setting sun; and I think it may have been for this reason that this legendary land came to be thought to have disappeared at the time when the gods ceased to walk the earth.

Some modern students have supposed that the ancients may have had a vague knowledge of the existence of the American continent, and that this was the origin of the tradition; and others have thought that there may actually have been an area of land which in some great convulsion

[6] Chapter Seventeen.

was overwhelmed by the sea. But the evidence is wholly lacking; and in the present state of our knowledge it must be assumed that the story told to Solon had its origin in the Egyptian conception of that paradise in the west where the gods still ruled, where the good souls lived forever, and into which each night the sun descended.

From Egypt Solon went across to Cyprus, where he stayed some time, and he is also said [7] to have visited Cilicia, on the mainland of Asia Minor opposite Cyprus. At about the time when Charaxos and Doricha-Rhodopis were married at Naukratis—that is to say, in about 566 B. C.—Solon paid a visit to Sardis, where he made the acquaintance of Crœsus, the son of the Lydian king, Alyattes. At this time Crœsus was a man in the late thirties, who had been made joint-sovereign with his aged father, but was virtually ruler of Lydia; and being anxious to impress Solon with his wealth and puissance, he showed him all the wonders of his capital and conducted him through his treasury and storehouses. He then asked his guest whether he, Crœsus, were not indeed the most fortunate of mortals; but Solon made the reply that there were other men of his acquaintance who were happier, as, for example, one Tellos, a citizen of Athens who had been an honest man, had had a family of worthy children, and had died gloriously on the field of battle; or again a certain Kleobis and his brother Biton who had loved one another and had been dutiful sons to their mother, and in the end had died painlessly in their sleep.

Crœsus was exasperated by this reply, which he is said to have regarded as both ill-bred and foolish; but Solon explained to him that no man could be regarded as fortunate who was still in the midst of the hazards of life, "for," he said, "the uncertain future has yet to come, with its every possible change of fortune, and him only to whom the gods

[7] Diogenes Laertius: *Solon.*

have continued the gift of happiness to the end can be called happy." These words were prophetic, for in the years to come, at a date later than the death of Sappho and therefore beyond the scope of this book, Crœsus was dethroned by Cyrus of Persia, and when he was about to be put to death by burning was heard to mutter, "Solon, Solon!"—having recollected what he had said. Cyrus, it may be added, asked him whom he was invoking, and, on hearing the story, pardoned him and allowed him to pass into an honorable retirement.

At the time of Solon's visit to Crœsus, Æsop was in Sardis, whither, as a celebrity, he had come over from Samos, evidently some years after receiving his freedom from his master, Iadmon—the same who had sold Doricha-Rhodopis to Xanthes, the merchant in whose company she had gone to Naukratis. Æsop was then at the height of his fame; and having here become the friend of Solon, he advised him to be more tactful in his dealings with the proud Crœsus. "Let your converse with kings, Solon, be either brief or seasonable," he said; but Solon answered, "No, either brief or reasonable." Diogenes Laetrius adds that Crœsus on another occasion, having displayed himself to Solon dressed in his royal robes and seated upon his jeweled throne, asked him if he had ever seen a more splendid sight, to which Solon replied: "Yes, I have seen pheasants and peacocks ten thousand times more splendid."

Solon had a bitter kind of wit, and some of his sayings which have survived reveal him as a disillusioned cynic. "Be on your guard against every man," he used to say; and "do not make friends hastily." Being asked once why he had imposed the death penalty in Athens for so many offenses against his laws, he replied, "Because these small offenses generally deserve that, and I have no higher for the greater ones." In regard to these laws, however, he remarked,

"Laws, after all, are like cobwebs: if any weak or insignificant thing falls into them they hold it fast, but if a thing of weight does so it breaks the meshes and escapes"—by which he meant to say that justice in Athens could be bought. "Men keep their promises when nothing can be gained by breaking them," is another instance of his cynicism. Once when he was mourning for his son who had died, a friend said to him, "You cannot mend matters by weeping," to which he replied, "That is why I am weeping."

He found life, however, an enthralling business, and when he read that Mimnermos, the melancholy poet of Smyrna, had named sixty years as the perfect age at which to die, he at once wrote a short verse in which he said that he himself would like to live till at least eighty. "Every day," he advised his friends, "grow older and learn something new." "Never tell a lie," he said. "Speech should be the image of actions." "Do not advise what is agreeable, but what is best." "Concentrate upon matters of importance," and "always make Reason your guide." "Moderation in all things," was the sum of his advice.

After leaving Sardis he went to Miletus, where lived the famous philosopher and scientist, Thales, to whom I have already referred in speaking of that city,[8] and who is usually placed at the head of the list of the Seven Wise Men of this age. Apollodoros of Athens, writing in the middle of the second century B. C., is quoted by Diogenes Laertius as saying that Thales was born in the first year of the Thirty-fifth Olympiad, that is to say in 640 B. C., but as it is agreed that he died in 546 B. C., and as his age at his death is also stated by some of our authorities to have been ninety and by others seventy-eight, he may with equal probability have been born in 636 B. C. or 624 B. C.

Herodotus and some other authors say that Thales was of

[8] Chapter Twelve.

Phœnician extraction, but the more usual tradition is that he was a native of Miletus—where he certainly lived and worked—and was of aristocratic family. Early in life, however, he went over to Egypt, where so many of his fellow Ionians were serving as soldiers or were engaged in trade; and he there studied with the learned priests of that country, who, it is stated, were the only teachers he ever had. Returning to Miletus, he lived the life of a recluse, devoting himself to his studies; but he made occasional excursions into politics—as when he urged the Ionians to institute a central council at Teos while maintaining the independence of each of their cities [9]—and from time to time he engaged in trade,[10] making once a small fortune out of some olive-groves which he had acquired when his observations had led him to believe that the harvest would be particularly good.

It seems that he never married. When he was young his mother urged him to do so, but he replied, "It is too soon"; and when in later life she again begged him to take a wife, he replied, "It is too late." A friend once asked him why he did not marry for the sake, at any rate, of having children; but he answered, "Because I am fond of children"—a cryptic reply which is capable of various interpretations. A man had the right to expect from his children, he said, just so much attention as he had given to *his* parents. He used to say that he thanked Fortune for three things in particular: that he was born a human being and not an animal, a Greek and not a foreigner, a man and not a woman; and when he was asked who in this life was happy, he replied, "He who is healthy in body, easy in his financial circumstances, and well-educated in mind." He believed in the immortality of the soul, and used to say that there was no difference between being alive and being dead; but when somebody

[9] Herodotus, i, 170.
[10] Plutarch: *Solon*, ii.

asked him why, then, he did not choose to die, he answered, "Because there is no difference."

Life for him was centered in thought; and he declared that absent friends should be as much considered as those who were present. Being once asked the question, "Can a man who does wrong escape the notice of the gods?" he replied, "No, not even if he but *think* wrong." To the inquiry, "What is a god?" he responded, "One that has neither beginning nor end." "God," he said, "is the most ancient of all things, for he had no birth; the world is the most beautiful of all things, for it is the work of God; place is the greatest of things, for it contains all things; intellect is the swiftest of things, for it runs through everything; necessity is the strongest of things, for it rules everything; and time is the wisest of things, for it finds out everything."

He believed that there were gods everywhere, and that even inanimate objects had souls, amber and the magnet being proof to him of this; and in his opinion the earth itself was a huge, living thing—a flat disk, alive, and floating on a sea of invisible, elemental fluid. Plutarch, it is true, says [11] that Thales knew the earth was spherical; but actually this fact was discovered by Pythagoras, the great philosopher of Samos, a few years later. All things, Thales declared, had their origin in water, and *were* water in various manifestations and conditions; but, according to Aristotle, he did not postulate that there was a Creator, or any single divine Intelligence governing the universe.

He said that to live virtuously and justly it was necessary to avoid doing, ourselves, what we blame in others. When a certain man who had committed adultery asked him whether he ought to swear that he had not done so, Thales shrugged his shoulders and said: "Well, perjury is no worse than adultery."

[11] Plutarch: *Placita,* iii, 10.

The famous injunction, "Know thyself," is stated to have originated with him; and he certainly said that to know oneself was the most difficult thing in the world; to which he added that the easiest thing was to give advice to another. "A multitude of words," he declared, "is no token of wisdom. Follow up one thing that is wise; choose one object that is worthy; and thus you will reprove the endlessly babbling tongue of foolish men." "What is the most pleasant thing?" somebody asked him; and he answered, "To succeed. But," he added, "do not become prosperous by wrongdoing, and let no one ever be able to accuse you of speaking ill of those who are your friends." When asked what was the best way to endure misfortune, he replied that it was by being able to regard one's enemies as even more unfortunate.

Thales was always regarded in antiquity as the very founder of Greek philosophy; but his fame rests as much upon his discoveries in geometry and astronomy, in both of which sciences he owed a great deal to the Egyptian priests. He is said to have divided the year into three hundred and sixty-five days, and the month into thirty days, just as did the Egyptians; and this implies that he also followed the Egyptian custom of adding five intercalary days between the end of one year and the beginning of the next. In Egypt the year was divided into three seasons—*Akhe,* winter, *Pero,* spring, and *Shom,* summer; [12] and as the Greek calendar of about this period was similarly divided into three seasons—*Cheimōn,* winter, *Ear,* spring, and *Theros,* summer—it may be that Thales had adopted these divisions. In Egypt, however, there was no Leap-year's Day added every four years to keep the calendar in position, and thus it fell back behind the actual seasons until in seven centuries or so the calendar's

[12] See the discussion of the calendar in my *History of the Pharaohs,* I, ch. 1.

mid-winter fell in actual mid-summer, and thus it slowly revolved, coming round into its correct position again every fourteenth or fifteenth century. In Greece, however, the months were generally divided alternately into twenty-nine and thirty days, and intercalary periods were added very irregularly to keep the calendar in position; and it thus seems that the efforts of Thales to put matters to rights by an improved Egyptian method were not successful.

He is credited with the discovery that the circuit of the sun between the solstices is not uniform, and he is said to have determined the sun's diameter to be the seven hundred and twentieth part of its apparent path from horizon to horizon. By the aid of the Egyptian records of eclipses, which probably extended back for three or four thousand years, he was able to predict—within certain fairly wide limits, of course—the sun's eclipse which took place on May 28th, 585 B. C.; [13] and thus he attained great fame. The study of the stars was his passion; and there is a story about him which relates that once when he left his house at night to observe the heavens he fell into a ditch, whereupon a wise old woman-servant who was with him said to him: "O Thales! —do you, who cannot see what is under your feet, think that you can understand what is in the sky?"

In geometry he made a number of discoveries, amongst which were the facts that a circle is bisected by its diameter and that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal. Some authorities say that it was he who first described a right-angled triangle in a circle; and that he sacrificed an ox to the gods to celebrate this revolutionary achievement. He applied his geometrical studies to practical purposes, showing, for instance, how to determine the distance of a ship at sea; and he measured the height of the pyramids in

[13] Chapter Ten.

Egypt by measuring the length of their shadows at the hour when a man's shadow was equal to his height.

In Miletus Thales and Solon became good friends, but Solon differed from him as to the advantages of being a bachelor, and so often urged him to take a wife that Thales at length decided to play a trick upon his Athenian friend for the purpose of proving that it was undesirable to have children. He therefore procured the services of a man who was instructed to say in the hearing of Solon that he had just arrived from Athens, and that he had there been present at the funeral of a very well-known youth, the son of one of the most respected persons in the city, who himself was away on his travels. When this piece of news was related, Solon at once asked the name of the unfortunate parent, but the man declared that he could not remember it, although he had heard that he was a great law-giver; and at this the Athenian, in much agitation, asked whether by any chance the name was Solon, to which the man replied that he thought it was. Solon thereupon clasped his hands to his head, and burst into tears; but Thales then confessed that the story was an invention. "These are the things, Solon," he said, "which keep me from marriage and from having children."

In the year 562 B. C. Solon returned to Athens, where his cousin Pisistratos was aiming at a Tyranny; and when at length this popular personage had actually become Tyrant in spite of Solon's frenzied efforts to prevent him, the aged statesman retired altogether from public affairs, and died in 558 B. C., having just attained that eighty years of life for which he had hoped. When he was very old, as has already been mentioned, the latest poem written by Sappho was recited to him one night at dinner by his nephew; and Solon was so enthralled by it that he insisted upon the young man

teaching it to him. One of the company, in surprise, said to him, "Why do you want him to teach it to you?" "Because," said Solon, "I want to learn it and die." [14]

[14] Stobæus: *Anthology,* xxix, 58, quoting Ælian.

Chapter Twenty

SAPPHO AND THE SEVEN WISE MEN

PITTAKOS, Solon, and Thales were regarded as the three most prominent of the Seven Wise Men of this age, Thales heading the list. Pittakos was Sappho's fellow-countryman, and whether or not she was on speaking-terms with him, she must have been familiar with all the details of his life and with the trend of his thought. It is not known whether Solon enjoyed her actual friendship, but since he was so keen an admirer of her work it is probable that he made her acquaintance when he was traveling in this part of the world. Thales, with his dislike for women, is not so likely to have been a friend of hers; but since Miletus and Lesbos were closely connected in trade and were not far distant from one another, one cannot suppose that there was no link of any sort between the poetess and the philosopher. The wisdom of these great men, at any rate, must have exerted some influence upon her own thought; and for this reason it will be as well to review here the lives of the other members of the famous company of the Seven.

I have already referred to Bias of Priene,[1] that caustic Ionian who told King Alyattes of Lydia to go and eat onions: the date of his birth and death are unknown, but various references to his dealings with Alyattes, considered together with the statement [2] that he lived on to a great age, show that he was alive at the time with which we are now dealing. He was one of the wealthiest men of his city, and its leading

[1] Chapter Twelve.

[2] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Bias.*

citizen; and his reputation for wisdom was so great that he came to be recognized throughout Greece as one of the Seven Wise Men, the philosopher Satyros of the third century B. C. even placing him at the head of the list.

Like Pittakos he had a poor opinion of his fellow-men, and used often to say, "Most men are bad." Once, during a storm at sea, the passengers who were with him on the rolling ship began to pray aloud to the gods, whereupon he exclaimed, "Keep quiet!—or they will find out that you are on board." On another occasion, when somebody questioned him as to what was piety, he remained silent, until, being asked why he did not reply, he said, "I am silent because you are putting questions about things with which you have no concern." He advised his friends to love one another while they could, since they would probably come to hate each other soon enough. He used to say that the thing most pleasant to men was hope, but that the thing from the doing of which they derived most pleasure was acquiring gain. When the Lydians were attacking Priene many of the citizens began to carry their valuables down to the sea with a view to flight across the water; and some of them, seeing Bias with nothing in his hands, advised him to follow their example, to which he replied that he *was* doing so, and had everything he valued with him.

The most difficult thing in life, he declared, was bearing with magnanimity a change of fortune for the worse. "Whatever good fortune befalls you," he said, "attribute it to the gods." "Treasure wisdom as the wherewithal for your whole journey from youth to old age, for it is more durable than any other possession." "Choose your line of action with care, but when you have decided upon it, persevere in it with determination." He himself was a man of the greatest resolution, and never spared himself in the service of his country. He was active until the end of his long life, and died in

harness. He had been pleading a cause in the law-courts, and at the end of his speech he sat down beside his grandson, and laid his weary head upon the young man's bosom; but when judgment was given in favor of his client and the court rose, he was found to be dead. The city buried him with great magnificence, and a temple was erected in his honor.

Chilon of Sparta was another of the Seven Wise Men. He is said to have been already an elderly man in 572 B. C., but was still active in 560 or 556 B. C., at one of which dates he was made an *ephor* in his native city.[3] Under a mask of composure and a cloak of restraint he concealed, it seems to me, a most excitable nature; and I dare say it was because he found it so necessary to keep a guard upon his tongue that he was compelled to cultivate that concise and abrupt manner of speech which in the end became habitual. From personal experience, he was obliged to admit that the most difficult thing was to keep a secret. He had to confess, too, that it was hard to control the tongue, especially at a dinner-party; hard not to speak ill of one's neighbors; and hard not to rail against injustice. Nearly all his admonitions to his fellow-men reveal the struggle he had had to restrain his own excitability. Thus he says: "Control your anger"; "keep guard upon yourself"; "learn first how to put your own house in order"; "learn to love quiet"; "do not go about your business in too much of a rush"; "do not gesticulate with your hands when speaking, for that is silly"; "do not use threatening language, for it is a womanish trick"; "speak no evil of the dead"; "do not let your tongue run away with your wits"; "do not desire the impossible"; "do not make fun of other people's misfortunes"; "if you are in a position of power, be lenient"; "try to submit to the laws"; and so forth. In the end he died of excitement after watching a boxing-match in which his son won the championship.

[3] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Chilon.*

Here was a man, I dare say, whom Sappho would have understood; and, indeed, it is possible that she did know him, for he visited cities in her part of the world,[4] such as Sardis and Priene, and he struck up a friendship with Æsop either in Sardis or Samos—a fact which suggests that on his travels he met the various celebrities of the age. It is said, by the way, that he happened to ask Æsop one day what he supposed Zeus was doing at that moment; to which Æsop replied that no doubt the deity was then engaged upon his usual business of overthrowing the mighty and exalting the humble. Chilon was something of a poet himself, and left behind him about two hundred verses, of which there is one quoted by Diogenes Laertius as being the most famous: "Gold is tested by hard whetstones which give certain proof of its purity; and the mind of man is brought to the test of good or evil by gold." [5] In this connection it may be mentioned that there is a surviving fragment of Sappho's verse [6] which reads:

> "Gold is the child of Zeus: neither moth or worm devours it, and it overpowers the strongest of mortal minds."

There is also another fragment [7] of hers which should be mentioned in this regard:

> "For gold is unspotted. . . ."

But the context is lost, except that Pausanias, in quoting the line, says that from the nature of gold it would seem that the

[4] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Chilon.*

[5] But some scholars would read *Chronos,* "time," instead of *Chrusos,* "gold," though the MS. gives the latter.

[6] Scholiast on Pindar, iv, 410.

[7] Pausanias, viii, 18, 5.

gods have given unimportant things power over those that are deemed valuable.

Another of the Seven Wise Men was Kleobulos of Lindos in the island of Rhodes, a man who had been educated in Egypt, and was famous for his physical strength and the beauty of his person as well as for his wisdom. He was certainly alive at this time, for Diogenes Laertius quotes a letter which he wrote to Solon in the days when the latter, on his return to Athens, was having trouble with Pisistratos as mentioned in the preceding chapter. This letter reads: "You have many friends and a home everywhere, but yet I think that Lindos would be the most agreeable place of residence for you, Solon, since it enjoys a democratic government and is a maritime island on which no person there living has anything to fear from Pisistratos, and whither your friends will flock to you from all quarters."

As a Dorian Greek he had strong views upon the subject of the education of women, and he believed that young girls should have so good a schooling that "parents should be able to give their daughters in marriage while they were girls in age but grown women in mentality." He gave his own daughter, Kleobuline, a liberal education; and she and he together used to amuse themselves by composing riddles in verse which must surely have been intended for the very young. One such conundrum, for example, reads: "There is a father who has twelve daughters, and each daughter has two families of thirty children most unlike in figure and complexion, one lot being white and the other black, and though they are not mortal they all die." The answer, of course, is the year with its twelve months of thirty days and thirty nights.

The recorded sayings of Kleobulos are mostly concerned with the affairs of every day, and are interesting mainly on account of their simplicity, which implies a simple state of

society. "Do not caress your wife nor quarrel with her in the presence of strangers," he used to say, "because the one is a sign of silliness and the other of downright lunacy." "Do not beat your servant when he is drunk, because in so doing you will appear to be drunk yourself." "Keep your body fit by exercise." "Do not laugh at anybody who is being scolded, because he will detest you for it." "Choose your wife from amongst your social equals, for if you marry above you you will have her relations for your masters." "When you leave your house think what you are going to do, and when you return think what you have done." "Do nothing by force." "Be ready for a reconciliation after a quarrel." "Speak kindly of people." "Be fonder of listening than of talking," for "the two things which are most common amongst men are ignorance and talkativeness." "Do a service to a friend to make him a greater friend, and to an enemy to make him a friend." "Be fond of learning, and not unwilling to learn." "Educate your children." "Be superior to pleasure," and "learn to bear misfortune with magnanimity." "The most powerful thing in your life is your opportunity."

Some ancient authors did not think that Kleobulos should be ranked as one of the Seven; and Eudoxos, who lived in the fourth century B. C., suggested that Myson of Chenæ should be listed in his place. Chenæ was a small town of little importance, situated either in Laconica in the Peloponnesus or near Mount Œta in Thessaly; and very little is known about the life of this, its one celebrated inhabitant, except that he was a misanthrope. It is related that he was observed to be laughing once when he believed himself to be alone in a solitary place; and on being asked why he laughed thus so happily when he was by himself, he replied, "For that reason."

Periander of Corinth, of whose life we have already read,[8]

[8] Chapter Four.

was usually regarded as one of the Seven; but Plato did not think that he was worthy of this honor, and suggested Myson in his place. Other writers thought that Epimenides, the Cretan who was called in by the Athenians to purify their city,[9] was a more fitting candidate for a place in the list than Myson; and, indeed, there was much argument in ancient times in regard to the composition of the Seven, only Thales, Solon, Pittakos, and Bias having undisputed claims. There was a tendency in antiquity to employ the number seven in forming any notable group of subjects, seven being a numeral of deep significance, due, originally, both to its use in primitive ritual as a unit representing a quarter of a lunar month, and to the fact that there were seven known planets in the heavens; and when, at the close of the period with which we are dealing, people began to unite the outstanding thinkers of the age into a convenient group of this kind, they evidently had difficulty in making the number seven fit the case. The most commonly accepted list, however, consisted of Thales, Solon, Pittakos, Bias, Chilon, Kleobulos, and Periander; and it was only natural that stories should gradually shape themselves in which these seven were related to have met and feasted together at places such as Corinth, Delphi, Mykale, Sardis, and so forth, or in which they were described as sending messages to one another and writing letters to each other.

The most famous of these tales is that of the golden bowl and supporting tripod which was to be given to the wisest of living beings, and which, having passed into the hands of one of these men, was modestly handed on by him to another of them, and so went the round of the seven, and was finally dedicated to the gods. There are various versions of the story.[10] In one account the bowl was said to have been

[9] Chapter Five.

[10] Diogenes Laertius: *Life of Thales.*

found in the sea by some fishermen, who handed it over to the people of Miletus, who gave it to Thales, who passed it on to another of the seven, who likewise conceded it to a third; and so, going the round, it came to Solon, who sent it to Delphi. According to some accounts the bowl had once belonged to Helen of Troy, who had thrown it into the sea; according to others it had gone to the bottom in the wreck of a ship carrying treasure from Periander to Thrasybulos, Tyrant of Miletus. Yet other versions related that it had not come from the sea at all, but had been offered by Crœsus of Lydia, or by a certain rich man of Arcadia, to the wisest of men, and was therefore given either to Thales or to Pittakos or to Bias, and was finally handed over to the temple of Apollo at Branchidæ, near Miletus. The main feature of the story, however, is common to all the versions, namely that each of the seven to whom the bowl was presented refused to admit that he was the wisest of men, and sent it on to another.

As I have already said, there is no direct evidence that Sappho was personally acquainted with any of these Seven Wise Men except Pittakos; but her reputation was so great that any important personage traveling in this part of the Ægean would probably have made a point of meeting her. With the exception of Periander, who had died in about 585 B. C., all these celebrated sages were living at the time when Sappho's career passed into the honored phase of middle age. She was forty-two when Pittakos died in 570 B. C.; she was fifty when Solon returned to Athens in 562 B. C. I do not mean to suggest that because she was getting on in years she had become more sedate, and therefore more likely to have been regarded by these elderly men as a woman worth meeting; for genius such as hers is quite ageless, and, as a matter of fact, the fires of her emotional life remained ablaze until her death. But I think it may be fairly said that by now her

reputation as a poetess, enhanced by every new poem she published, had been so long continued that her fame must have spread all over the Greek world, and that therefore we are entitled to consider every known celebrity of this age as a possible friend of hers.

She herself was always regarded in antiquity as a woman endowed with wisdom as well as with the gift of song; and in an epigram written upon her by Pinytos [11] it is said that "her wise sayings are immortal," [12] and Socrates [13] classed her amongst the *sophoi,* "the Wise." Philo,[14] the Jewish philosopher of the first century A. D., writing on the subject of punishment, speaks of the penitent "yielding to the good counsel of the woman-poet, Sappho; for she says,

" 'The understanding gods evoke tears.' "

Unfortunately, the early Church did not permit any appreciation of wisdom which it may have possessed to outbalance its prejudices; and in the destruction of her works her aphorisms went up in smoke. Only a few have survived. The following lines of hers are quoted by a commentator on Pindar: [15]

"Wealth without goodness is not a harmless neighbor,
but the uniting of both is the summit of fortune."

Another piece of her wisdom is: [16]

"You cannot bend a stiff mind."

[11] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 16.
[12] *Sophai rhēsies,* "wise sayings."
[13] Plato: *Phædrus,* 235B.
[14] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1356, 4a, 14.
[15] Scholiast on Pindar, ii, 96.
[16] Herodian, ii, 932, 29 (Lentz).

And another is: [17]

"He who is fair is fair in appearance, but he who is good will soon seem fair also."

I have already quoted certain other aphorisms of hers, namely, "When anger rises in the breast, restrain the idly-yelping tongue." "The trap never catches the older birds." "Death is a misfortune: the gods at least think so or they would have died." "A woman is always easily mastered who values little what is near and dear." And, "In this world, one cannot look for perfection." There is also a fragment [18] from some lost poem of hers which may perhaps be regarded as a wise saying: it reads *mē ḳinē cheradas,*

"Do not meddle with the pebbles,"

and the scholiast who quotes it remarks that the last word in this case signifies little heaps of small stones. But the meaning is ambiguous, for she may have been referring to those little piles of stone which in ancient times were commonly thrown together to mark a sacred spot—a sort of primitive altar—in which case she would have meant "do not meddle with sacred things"; or she may have been referring to the *parathalassia sḳubala,*[19] "seashore refuse" which heaped itself up with the shingle and was, perhaps, considered untouchable.

These aphorisms are all that have been left to us out of the destruction of her works; but if we compare them with those of the Seven Wise Men we shall see that Socrates probably had good reason for regarding her as one of the out-

[17] Galen: *Exhortation to Learning,* 8.
[18] Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes, i, 1123.
[19] See *Etymologicum Magnum,* 808, 37.

standing sages of the period. The subject-matter of most of her poems is so light and delicate, so concerned, too, with her own personal feelings and burning emotions, that we are inclined to forget that she was a woman of scholarly brains, the beauty and clarity of whose language indicates a capacity for careful thought as well as eloquence. She was, however, like so many people of genius, what is called oversexed, and her songs were more often inspired by themes of love than by those of philosophy. But perhaps it is to the world's advantage that this is so, for human ethics are better understood as the centuries go by, and the words of wisdom of olden times are often the fallacies and more often the commonplaces of to-day; but love, on the contrary, remains a primitive thing and its expression in words is never out of date. In matters of love, time is at a standstill; we do not improve; and Sappho's passions have a more stirring appeal to mankind's eternally youthful heart than ever her aphorisms could have to the maturer mind of to-day, wearied as it is by the always increasing weight of its social obligations.

Moreover, "I am in love" is a statement which attracts the attention of everybody, even though its utterance is heard as a whisper coming to the ear across incalculable ages; but "I know the path of wisdom" is an assertion which, even when it is not open to doubt, appeals only to the few. Not many of us are wise, but all of us are lovers.

Chapter Twenty-One

FURTHER FRAGMENTS OF SAPPHO'S POETRY

AMONGST the scraps of Sappho's poetry which have been recovered from oblivion by the spade of the modern excavator in Egypt there is a part of a long piece which, as the manuscript shows by the inscription at its end, was the final poem of the Second Book of her collected works.[1] The first portion describes in vivid and stirring language the bringing of the news to King Priam of Ilium (Troy) that his son Hector was returning home with his bride Andromache, daughter of the King of Cilician Thebes; and the second part tells of the reception of the couple in the city. The first lines are lost, with the exception of the one word "Cyprus," which had reference, no doubt, to Aphrodite. This sentence then follows:

> ". . . A herald there came, distinguished by the power of his quick-moving limbs, bringing swiftly to the people of Ida these good tidings . . ."

Here one or two lines are lost, after which we read:

> ". . . and throughout all the rest of Asia [Minor] the news attained the imperishable: 'Hector and his comrades are bringing from sacred Thebes and from . . . Placia her of the glancing-eyes, the gentle Andromache, by ship across the briny sea; and plentiful are the golden

[1] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1232, i, ii, and 2076; restored by Hunt, Edmonds, etc.

curls and the purple draperies which are the breeze's many-colored playthings; and countless also are the silver drinking-cups and the ivory-ornaments.' Thus he spoke. Then quickly sprang up [Hector's] dear father; and the news went forth throughout Ilus's [2] spacious city. Straightway the people of Ilium yoked the mules to the easy-running carriages, and there mounted into them a throng of women and delicate-ankled maidens, while separately the daughters of Priam rode out. And horses the men harnessed to the chariots, and with them came all the young men, till in vast array moved a vast people. Then the drivers drove their crested horses out from . . ."

A break of several lines follows; and when the story can be resumed the bridal couple are entering the city.

"Then, when like gods Hector and Andromache were mounted in their chariots, they accompanied them in crowds; and the [whole] community hastened back into their beloved Ilium. The sweet-toned flute and the lyre were mingled, and there was the click of castanets, while shrilly the maidens sang the sacred song, until into the air there rose a sound indescribable, so that the Olympian gods laughed [to hear it.] Everywhere in the streets there was merrymaking, for bowls and cups [of wine] were mixed upon the well-shaped tables of stone, and myrrh and cassia and frankincense curled upwards. And then the elder women raised a great cry, and all the men shouted loudly their happy pæan of thanksgiving to the far-flinging Divine-Harpist [Apollo], and hymned the godlike Hector and Andromache."

[2] Ilus, one of the founders of Troy.

This is the longest fragment of Sappho's work which we now possess, and even in the halting translation it will be noticed how admirably the poem conveys the feeling of excitement to the reader. It may be that she composed this piece as a song to be sung at a wedding; but, whatever its purpose, it has a particular interest because it reveals her as a writer who did not disdain the old epic tales so dear to the Greek poets, and could tell them with a new animation. Like all the Greeks she had evidently been brought up on the legends of the Trojan war; and we have already noticed two other poems of hers in which she refers to this subject—to the heroes coming back after the fall of Troy [3] in one, and to Hermione, the daughter of Helen,[4] in the other. The legends of the gods likewise provided her with material, as the following fragments show:

". . . And Areus declares that he could carry off Hephæstos by force. . . ." [5]

"They say that Leda once found hidden an egg of hyacinth-color. . . ." [6]

". . . Though Leto and Niobe were exceedingly dear companions [*hetæræ*]. . . ." [7]

And here are four lines of hers, quoted by Athenæus,[8] which describe some legendary wedding-feast over which the gods presided:

[3] Chapter Eleven.
[4] Chapter Nine.
[5] Priscian: *Grammar,* ii, 277 (Keil).
[6] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 822, 39.
[7] Athenæus, xiii, 28.
[8] Athenæus, x, 25; xi, 49.

". . . And with ambrosia there was a bowl mixed, and Hermes took the wine-jug to pour out for the gods. . . . And then they all raised their goblets, and poured out a libation, wishing all manner of good fortune to the bridegroom."

The Latin grammarian Servius mentions [9] a poem by Sappho on the subject of the theft of fire from the sun by Prometheus; but he does not quote from it; Gellius tells us that she wrote about Niobe's nine children; [10] Servius mentions the fact that she told in verse the story of the freeing of the seven boys and seven girls by Theseus when he slew the Minotaur; [11] and there is a reference to another lost poem of hers which related the story of Endymion and the Moon-goddess [12]—but of this I shall have more to say in the next chapter.

There are several isolated lines from verses of hers addressed to Aphrodite and other celestial beings, which have survived because they were quoted for technical reasons by various ancient authors; and although they are not of outstanding value, they must be recorded here so that the reader may have before him everything that is known of the poetess. The following is evidently from a poem to Aphrodite:

"Whether for thee Cyprus and Paphos, or Panormos. . . ." [13]

Paphos, in Cyprus, was the place at which Aphrodite was supposed to have come ashore after being born out of the

[9] Servius: *Eclogues,* vi, 42.
[10] Gellius, xx, 7.
[11] Servius on Vergil: *Æneid,* vi, 21.
[12] Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes, iv, 57.
[13] Strabo, i, 40.

sea, and it was the chief center of her worship. Panormos is the name of several seaport towns, one of which is the modern Palermo in Sicily; but there is no evidence as to which is here meant. The next two fragments are also from verses dedicated to Aphrodite:

"Come, Lady of Cyprus, to hand round in golden goblets nectar mixed with delicate good-cheer for these my *hetæræ* and thine. . . ." [14]

"I dreamt that I talked with the Cyprus-born . . . " [15]

And these two lines are also probably addressed to Aphrodite:

"And like a child to its mother I have flown [to thee]." [16]

". . . She calls to her child." [17]

The subject of Sappho's poems to Aphrodite introduces us to one more of her *hetæræ,* a girl named Timas, who appears to have been an Ionian of Phokæa, the northernmost city of the Ionian Confederacy, and who seems to have sent a purple scarf or handkerchief to adorn the head of a statue of the goddess in Sappho's house, in regard to which the poetess wrote these lines to Aphrodite:

". . . And the purple handkerchief, arranged over both

[14] Athenæus, xi, 9.
[15] Hephæstion, 74.
[16] Herodian, ii, 187, 16.
[17] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 107, 11.

thy cheeks, which Timas sent for thee from Phokæa—a gift from a precious [giver]. . . ." [18]

Here the word *timia,* "precious," is a pun, I suppose, on the name Timas. There is also a reference to "Little Timas" (*Timadia*) in a quotation without context preserved in the Glossary of Hesychius; and in the Anthology [19] there is Sappho's epitaph on this same girl, who died, it is stated, before she was married:

"This dust is little Timas, who, having died before marriage, was received into Persephone's dark bridal-chamber; and though she faded away far from here [20] all her fair companions cut off with the knife the lovely hair of their heads."

From this epitaph it is perhaps to be gathered that the girl died in Sappho's house at Mitylene, and that her ashes were sent to Phokæa for interment, this inscription being placed above the grave; and in this case it was her friends at Phokæa who cut off some of the plaits of their hair as a sign of mourning.

There are two surviving fragments of poems addressed by Sappho to Peitho, the goddess of Persuasion:

"O mortal-enchanting daughter of Aphrodite . . ." [21]

". . . for the precursor of the wile-weaving Cyprus-born . . ." [22]

[18] Athenæus, ix, 79.
[19] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 489.
[20] The verb is *Apophthiō,* in which the prefix *apo* may mean "afar off."
[21] Scholiast on Hesiod: *Works and Days,* 73.
[22] Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1149, b, 15.

Himerius [23] tells us that in one of Sappho's poems there is a description of Apollo, in his capacity as choir-leader of the Muses, dancing with them and the Graces on Mount Helikon, their sacred mountain in Bœotia, to which he was drawn through the air by swans yoked to his chariot, his hair golden, and a lyre in his hand; and he speaks also of another poem of hers in which she describes Dionysos going at the beginning of spring, crowned with blossoms and ivy, to the valleys of Lydia and to the far-off mountains sacred to him.

Of Sappho's poems to the Muses and Graces the following fragments have come down to us:

"Hither now, tender Graces and lovely-haired Muses . . ." [24]

"Rose-armed, pure Graces, come hither, daughters of Zeus . . ." [25]

"Come hither, Muses, leaving your golden [home] . . ." [26]

"And thou thyself, Kalliope. . . ." [27]

Kalliope was the Muse of epic poetry. I may mention here that there were nine Muses, the names and vocations of the other eight being as follows: Klio, of history; Euterpe, of lyric poetry; Melpomene, of tragedy; Terpsichore, of choral dances; Erato, of love poetry; Polymnia, of sacred hymns; Urania, of astronomy; and Thalia, of light or comic poetry.

[23] Himerius: *Orations,* xiii, 7.
[24] Hephæstion, 56.
[25] Argument to Theocritus, 28.
[26] Hephæstion, 106.
[27] Hephæstion, 89.

Sappho, it will be recalled, was herself frequently classed in antiquity as the Tenth Muse.

It will be as well to record here a few isolated sentences, or parts of sentences, from other lost verses, though little is to be gleaned from them:

"As for me, I am conscious of this. . . ." [28]

"It is not you who are to me . . . so long as you are willing. . . ." [29]

". . . That man seems to himself. . . ." [30]

". . . And I will leave behind for thee . . ." [31]

" 'We will give,' said the father . . ." [32]

"And girls plaited garlands . . ." [33]

". . . garlands of celery . . ." [34]

The following is a line quoted by Pollux, who says that it refers to the god of Love:

"[When Love] comes from heaven, and throws off his purple cloak . . ." [35]

[28] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 16, 11.
[29] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 93, 23.
[30] Idem, 82, 16.
[31] Idem, 81, 23.
[32] Cramer: *Inedita,* i, 190, 19.
[33] Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Thesmophoria,* 401. The word *Oraiai,* "girls," means those of marriageable age.
[34] Pollux, vi, 107.
[35] Pollux, x, 124.

Here are two references to Sleep:

". . . When for them night-long [sleep] overtakes their [eyes] . . ." [36]

". . . Upon the eyes night's dark slumber was poured down." [37]

Sappho, it seems, was very fond of using similes, such as:

"Far whiter than an egg." [38]

"Far more sweet-singing than the lyre." [39]

"More golden than gold." [40]

And Gregorius [41] speaks of certain "erotic turns of phrase such as those of Anacreon and Sappho," and he quotes, for example:

"Whiter than milk."
"More delicate than water."
"More sweet-singing than a lyre."
"More skittish than a mare."
"Daintier than rosebuds."
"Softer than a light wrap."
"More precious than gold."

But he does not say which of them are to be attributed to Sappho. Some of these similes became, or were already,

[36] Apollonius: *Pronouns,* 99, 17.
[37] *Etymoligicum Magnum,* 117, 14.
[38] Athenæus, ii, 50.
[39] Demetrius: *Elocution,* 161.
[40] Idem.
[41] Gregorius on Hermogenes, in *Rhetorica Græca* (Walz) vii, 1236.

proverbial; and in this connection I may mention two other phrases quoted from Sappho's work which appear elsewhere as proverbs, though whether they were first used by her or were borrowed by her from current speech is not known. The first of these has reference to those who wish to keep out of any business because of the dangers which go with its advantages:

"For me neither the honey nor the bees."

Diogenian,[42] who quotes it, says that it means that a person will not take the sour with the sweet. The other is:

"Fonder of children than Gello."

Zenobius,[43] in quoting it, explains that Gello was a girl who died young and was so devoted to children that the Lesbians used to imagine her ghost as haunting their nurseries, and when a child died they used to say that Gello had caused its death by her famished kisses.

Maximus of Tyre [44] tells us that some of Sappho's poems took the form of arguments with, or attacks upon, her two chief rivals, Andromeda and Gorgo; and he says that just as Socrates refutes and jeers at Prodikos, Gorgias, and Thrasymachos, so Sappho pours her scorn upon these two women. Andromeda, it will be remembered, was described by Sappho as a countrified woman without social graces; but Gorgo, it seems, was a lady of aristocratic lineage, for Maximus says that in the same way that Socrates greets his rivals with exaggerated politeness, so Sappho begins one of these poems with the words:

[42] Diogenian: *Proverbs*, i, 279.
[43] Zenobius: *Proverbs*, i, 58.
[44] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii), 19.

"Many greetings to the daughter of many kings,"

and this, I suppose, must have been addressed to Gorgo, since the description does not fit the other. Perhaps it was to her also that in another lost poem she made the remark:

"But come, do not be so conceited because of a ring." [45]

And it may have been in a jest about Andromeda's clothes that she speaks of something being like

". . . a worn-out dish-cloth hanging wet," [46]

if I may so translate the words *aimitubion stelasson;* for it will be remembered that Sappho elsewhere makes fun of Andromeda's skirts. Perhaps, too, it was at the close of an attack upon one of these rivals that she wrote the line:

"With what eyes . . . ?" [47]

words which are probably from a sentence reading: "With what eyes will you dare to look me in the face after this?"

Suidas [48] states that Sappho "also wrote *epigrammata,*" that is to say, concise little inscriptions in verse; and one of these, on the girl Timas, we have already seen. There is another one in the Greek Anthology,[49] which Sappho composed and inscribed at the foot of the tomb of a nameless baby girl who, at her birth, had been dedicated to Artemis by her mother, a priestess of that goddess. It reads:

[45] Herodian, ii, 932, 23 (Lentz).
[46] Scholiast on Aristophanes: *Plutus,* 729. He says that *aimitubion* (or *hēmitubion*) means a half-worn dish-cloth.
[47] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 759, 35.
[48] Suidas: *Lexicon.*
[49] *Palatine Anthology,* vi, 269.

"I am a little girl and voiceless, and yet, if any ask, I cry aloud with this voice at my feet which never wearies of deposing that I was dedicated to the fiery [50] daughter of Leto by Aristo, daughter of Hermokleitos, son of Saunaidas, a priestess of thine, thou Lady of women; to whom be thou gracious, granting, as the first consideration,[51] renown to our house."

The goddess Artemis, one of whose most usual symbols was a fiery torch, was the daughter of Leto and Zeus; and since human sacrifices are known to have been a feature of her early worship,[52] one cannot reject the thought that this baby was a victim of the practice, and that Sappho wrote the inscription not without consciousness of its irony.

In the Greek Anthology there is one more inscription of this kind written by Sappho, but to this I shall refer later, as also to the remainder of the important fragments of her work. Meanwhile it will be as well to complete the catalogue of the known remains of her writings by mentioning the dozen or so single words of hers which are to be found in quotations scattered throughout ancient literature. Some of these are unimportant, and hardly require mention: "Danger," "fordable," "conduit," "climbing-vines," "nitre," "learned," "I might lead"; but the others are worth examination.

Photius [53] refers to her use of the word *akakos,* "ingenuous," and says that it really means "without experience of evil"—an expression which attracts the attention because of Sappho's frequent reference to innocence, purity, virgin-

[50] The word is *Aithopia.*
[51] *Prophrōn.*
[52] Plutarch: *De Superstitione,* 10.
[53] Photius: *Lexicon* (Reitz) p. 57.

ity, and those other child-like qualities which so greatly appealed to her. Another interesting word used by her is *grutē,* which Phrynichos, the grammarian, records [54] as meaning "a chest in which scents and women's articles are kept." The word means a hut or small building, for in early times—particularly in Egypt—these chests were constructed in the form of a miniature storehouse. Pollux mentions [55] the word *beudos* as being used by Sappho, and says that it means a transparent chemise. Athenæus refers [56] to Sappho's use of the words *barōmos* and *barbitos,* both musical instruments, apparently harps of some kind. Orion mentions [57] the word *chenys* which she uses for "lyre": it actually means a tortoise, for, according to tradition, the first lyre was made by stretching strings across a tortoise-shell. Pollux, again, speaks [58] of *chrusastragaloi phialai,* "gold-ankled drinking-cups," mentioned in one of Sappho's poems. And, lastly, Hesychius, in discussing the word *hektores,*[59] which he says are the pegs or holders on a carriage-pole, presumably for supporting the reins, mentions that Sappho calls Zeus by this term—the Holder (of the reins).

It is with a sense of frustration, with a feeling almost of despair, that here laboriously I have gathered together these little bits and scraps, with no better object, perforce, than to bring before the reader of this book everything that remains of Sappho's poetry. It is like picking up the stray beads from the bottom of a plundered jewel-box, and sadly adding them to the handful of fragments of once priceless necklaces which, with the one or two complete pieces, are all that the

[54] Phrynichos, Bekker: *Anecdota Græca,* i, 34, 2.
[55] Pollux, vii, 49.
[56] Athenæus, iv, 80.
[57] Orion, 28, 15.
[58] Pollux, vi, 9B.
[59] Hesychius: *Glossary.*

robbers have left of a fabulous treasure. Fortunately I have in reserve a few more fragments which will serve to illustrate the last phase of her life; and to these, and to the final tragedy, let us now turn our attention.

Chapter Twenty-Two

SAPPHO'S LAST YEARS IN LESBOS

SOMEWHERE about 200 B. C., Apollonius of Rhodes wrote a poem, called *Argonautica,* in which occurred the line: "So then, I am not the only woman to go off in quest of the Latmian cave," the cave, that is to say, in which the legendary Endymion slept; and against this line an ancient scholiast, or marginal commentator, has written: "The love-story of Selene (the Moon) is told by Sappho . . . and there it is said that Selene comes down to Endymion in this cave." [1] The famous legend is thus to be traced back to Sappho, who probably gave form to some vague folk-tale current in the Ionian lands around Mount Latmos in Asia Minor, that is to say behind the city of Miletus. There were various versions of the story in circulation in later times, but the most usual, and perhaps the one told by Sappho, related how Endymion, a young shepherd, was seen by the Moon-goddess while he lay asleep in this cave on Mount Latmos, and she, being enthralled by his youthful grace and beauty, kept him asleep there, eternally young, so that she might come to him every night and arouse his dreaming passions by her kisses, thus enjoying his slumbering love which alone had proved capable of warming her cold, ethereal heart. In another version of the legend, Endymion was described as a King of Olympia of long ago who had happened to be in the neighborhood of Latmos when Selene found him; and by these visitations to him in his sleep he became, as the centuries went by, the father of fifty little moons who were the

[1] Scholiast on Apollonius of Rhodes, iv, 57.

fifty lunar months of the Olympian four-year cycle. But this is evidently a later elaboration of the story.

Now it may be said in general that narrative poetry discloses in its subject-matter the kind of situation to which its author reacts emotionally, and reveals the particular tendencies of the poet's nature and the particular angle from which the circumstances of life are viewed. The poet, in fact, must derive some sort of pleasure or stimulating thrill from the story which is told: otherwise the poetic inspiration would not be forthcoming. And if we apply this principle to the case of Sappho's poem on the subject of Selene's love for Endymion we shall find, I think, that a most illuminating sidelight is thrown upon her emotional peculiarities.

Her childhood was passed, it will be remembered, at a time when all the young men of Lesbos were away at the wars; and when they came rollicking back at the conclusion of peace their rough manners seem to have offended her fastidious taste, for she did not marry until, considerably later, she met the wealthy and presumably elegant young merchant from Andros. Even the cultured Alkaios evoked from her no response to his passionate love: he was too violent in his sentiments, and he drank too much—a habit which she evidently disliked, since she never sings the usual praises of the vine in her verses. In her widowhood it was towards the youth of her own sex that her heart opened, for here the extreme delicacy of her nature found a more congenial atmosphere. It is true that her brief married life had been happy, and that, as she says, her husband's rôle of lover had not been unattractive to her; but it is evident enough that the virginal, feminine grace of a girl was nearer to her ideal than either the rough masculinity or the foppish effeminacy of the average young man of her time.

There is clear evidence that, in the abstract, the male character and form could arouse her emotions; but in actuality

she seems to have feared or disliked the usual masculine temperament, and to have dreaded that physical mastery of man over woman from which, as I remarked before, the feminine mind so often derives a certain instinctive pleasure. She was, as Athenæus says,[2] a thorough woman, and her verses are essentially feminine; but this does not mean that therefore she was attracted by the thorough man. On the contrary, her nature, as I read it, was one which was repelled by those qualities usually dominant in the male; and though her physical being was normal to the extent that it demanded—if seldom with overwhelming insistence—its physical completion in the uniting of the sexes, it was abnormal in its almost habitual rejection of that very union because of a dislike of the mental attitude of the generality of men towards women. In a word, she shunned in actuality the male moved by male instinct, yet in thought shunned not the masculine as the physical completion of the feminine.

Therefore, the conception of Endymion, the sleeping lover, charmed her. She took the bare legend and elaborated it into the story we know, because she could read into it so much more than was present in its folk-form. She understood the reason why the goddess came night after night to the beautiful shepherd, yet would not permit him to awake. The Moon-goddess in her poem was herself: Endymion was the ideal youth, physically to be desired, and in slumber not to be feared, a man in the response of breath to breath, of caress to caress, but not a man in that forcefulness which displeased her. Something in her temperament, moreover, reacted with warmth to the thought of Selene's active, not passive, part in these tender pleasures of the night; and his helplessness in her hands, and her gentle, indulgent management of him in his helplessness, enthralled her imagination and inspired her poetic genius. The legend of Endym-

[2] Athenæus, xv, 35.

ion as we know it is, I think, Sappho's creation; and in it, unconsciously, she reveals her own heart's longings.

In 560 B. C., when Solon was struggling in Athens against the new tyranny of his cousin Pisistratos, when at Sardis the old King Alyattes at last died and his son Crœsus became sole monarch of Lydia, Sappho was fifty-two years of age. Her black hair was touched with gray, and her face, in spite of the creams and perfumed oils which doubtless she used, was beginning to show those faint lines which are the dread of every woman's middle age. Yet her heart was young, and the fire within her passionate breast had not died down. She was bitterly conscious of her years, and the slow process of the departure of her charms was watched by her in her mirror with increasing despair. There was still left to her, however, her personal magnetism, her grace, her graciousness, her elegance, her wit, and her brains; and these qualities, together with her fame and her wealth, evidently retained for her her social leadership in Mitylene, and filled her house with her friends and admirers.

It must have been at this time that one of the men who frequented her society asked her to marry him; and it would seem that for a while she entertained the proposal with some interest, for, as I have pointed out, she was not averse to men, provided that they conformed to her exceptional requirements and approximated to her ideal. At length, however, she decided to reject the offer, for, being a woman of very clear sight, she knew that she could not much longer hold the physical love of a man, even though she might retain his admiration. She had no illusions about herself: she was growing old, and sorrowfully she realized the fact. She therefore wrote to this personage an answer in verse, part of which has been found in Egypt amongst the scraps of her published poems. It is the saddest of letters. It reads: [3]

[3] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1231, 10. Restored by Edmonds.

"If my breasts were still capable of giving suck, and my womb were able to bear children, then to another marriage-bed not with trembling feet would I come; but now on my skin age is already causing innumerable lines to go about, and Love hastens not to fly to me with his gift of pain [4] . . . of the illustrious . . . taking for your own . . . and sing to us of her of the violet-scented breast . . ."

The last sentences seem to contain her advice to him to seek a wife amongst the noble young ladies of Mytilene, and thus to be able to come to Sappho and sing to her the praises of his bride.

Yet though she declares, in one of those exquisite phrases which characterize her work, that Love with his gift of pain is in no haste any longer to come to her, it seems that there was another man who at about this time made a proposal of marriage to her. He was evidently much younger than she; and it may well be that she had amused herself with him, not realizing that she was still capable of infatuating a young man by those brilliant qualities which sometimes in the case of famous women endure long after the summer of their life is past. Here is the surviving fragment of the verses she wrote to him: [5]

". . . but if you love me, choose a more youthful companion of your bed, for I cannot endure to be married to a young man. I am too old."

Athenæus tells us [6] that one of Sappho's poems was addressed to a man who was greatly admired for his good looks, and he quotes two lines from it, which read:

[4] *Algesidôros.*
[5] Stobæus: *Anthology,* 71, 4.
[6] Athenæus, xiii, 17.

"Stand up and look me in the face as friend to friend, and unveil the beauty that is in your eyes."

These words seem to have been written to a youth who was shy of her, for they suggest a certain condescension on her part; and one images her, thus, greatly attracted by the handsome appearance of this young man with the beautiful eyes who, either because of his youth or his humble social standing, had bowed himself before so famous a lady. Perhaps it was this selfsame personage who, having been led on by her and allowed to become intimate with her, lost his head and asked her to marry him, thus evoking that sad cry from her: "I am too old." She could not, like the Moon-goddess, enchant him into an eternal sleep so that he might be her Endymion; she could not halt the process of her decline and be forever a part of his dreams: she knew that soon he would wake up and see her as she really was, a woman whose hair was turning gray, and this she could not endure.

Her age was a torment to her, but, knowing that her malady could not be cured, she faced the situation boldly. When her girls called her the fairest of women, the sweetest player upon the lyre, she wrote to them frankly telling them that to praise her now that her prime was past was to cast a slight upon the Muses. The fragments of a poem of hers to this effect have been found,[7] but only the ends of the lines have survived, the beginnings having been torn away; yet even so we can get the sense of it by the aid of the words which I have placed in brackets, and which will serve to make the theme intelligible.[8]

[7] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1787, 1 and 2, 10.

[8] These are a condensation of the restorations offered by J. M. Edmonds in the *Cambridge Philological Society Proceedings,* 1927.

"[*You dishonor*] the good gifts [*of the Muses*], children, [*when you say*] . . . 'dear [*Sappho*], . . . player of the clear, sweet lyre' . . . [*for*] . . . my skin with age is [*lined, and turned is*] my hair from its blackness . . . nor do my legs speed about [*as formerly when we used to dance*] like the little fawns. But who can cure it? . . . It is not possible. [*As surely as night follows*] the rose-armed dawn, [*and darkness*] . . . speeds [*to the ends*] of the earth, [*Death*] overtakes [*us; and as Death would not restore*] the beloved wife [*of Orpheus to him, so every*] woman who dies he expects [*to keep prisoner, though he should*] let her follow [*her rescuer*]."

The reference here is to the legend of Orpheus, who went down to Hades in search of his wife, but failed to rescue her, although she had followed him to the brink of daylight before she was caught again.

Then comes a sentence which is quoted by Athenæus: [9]

"But I, be it known, love delicate living, and for me richness and beauty belong to the desire of the sun,"

after which only a word here and there remains, the sense apparently being that she will, therefore, not creep away to her grave until needs must, but will continue, loved and loving, with her girls here on earth, this being all that she can ask, nor does she desire them to flatter her by praise deserved only when she was younger.

Her occasional interest in men did not deflect her thoughts from her *hetærœ*. These girls still came to her from far and

[9] Athenæus, xv, 35.

near, and her delight in them, if not as great as formerly, was still considerable.

"Toward you, my beautiful ones, this mind of mine will not change,"

she wrote; [10] and perhaps to this period of her life may be attributed the line:

"To-day for my *hetæræ* these songs right well will I sing." [11]

She still was enthralled by the beauty of the young girls of Lesbos whom she met, or whom she saw as she took her daily walks in fields or woods; and thus she begins a poem:

"I saw one day gathering flowers a very dainty little girl. . . ." [12]

A torn fragment of another of her poems, on which only the beginnings of the lines are to be seen, has been found in Egypt; [13] but its sense can be gathered by the tentative addition of the words given here in brackets.[14]

"You had crouched down frightened, [*children, . . . behind*] a bay-tree when [*I passed . . .*], and all things sweeter [*seemed for the sight of you*]. Truly I drank that [*draught with thirsty eyes*]; and the women [*who were with me thought me a silent*] walking-companion,

[10] Apollonius: *Pronouns*, 98, 2.
[11] Athenæus, xiii, 28.
[12] Athenæus, xii, 79.
[13] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1787, 3,3.
[14] Mainly suggested by J. M. Edmonds in the *Cambridge Philological Society Proceedings*, 1927.

[*for I had become heedless of their company*], and sometimes I scarcely heard them [. . . *for*] my contented spirit, indeed, [*had fled back to happy days.*] Such things, however, are of my destiny. [*I thought*], gentle [*maidens, that*] I would come [*and speak to you, but*] you were beforehand with me . . . , [*and yet*] a fair [*sight it was to see you*] and the very clothes [*you wore, charmed me.*]"

There is some reason to suppose that she had a serious illness at this time, and, indeed, her reference to Death in the poem which we read just now may perhaps have been inspired by a recent close approach to the dark portals of the dreaded underworld. Maximus of Tyre quotes [15] two lines of hers, and says in this connection: "Socrates scolds [his wife] Xanthippe for weeping when he is about to die, and similarly Sappho chides her daughter [Kleïs]." He then gives the couplet, which reads:

"For in a house that serves the Muses there must be no lamentation: such a thing does not befit it."

But the fact that these carefully turned lines were included amongst her poems rather suggests that they were not composed when she was actually about to die, but that they were written, when her health was restored, as a poetical record of an injunction given by her at the time when she was ill.

It may be that, as a result of this serious illness, she was obliged to send her *hetæræ* away, for there is a scrap of a poem of hers [16] which seems to have been written as a farewell to them. Again part of each of the surviving lines is

[15] Maximus of Tyre, xviii, 9.
[16] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1231, 13.

lost, and a guess at the missing words (given here in brackets) has had to be made.[17] The fragment reads:

". . . [*To them*] I replied: 'Gentle [*ladies*], you will ever remember [*till you are old*] our life together in [*the splendor*] of our youth. For [*many things*] both [*pure*] and beautiful we then did [*together*]. And now that [*you depart hence, love*] wrings [*my heart*]. . . .' "

In the old days she had been torn by jealousy at the thought that a girl whom she loved should transfer her affections elsewhere; but now, that magnanimity which is middle age's great compensation, enabled her to contemplate such an eventuality without pain. Thus she could write to one of her *hetæræ:*

"May you sleep in the bosom of a tender companion . . ." [18]

The word "companion" is the feminine *hetæra,* "girl-friend"; and it is characteristic of Sappho's outlook that though she might lose her heart from time to time to a male lover, she could wish to one of her own sex no greater happiness than that she might experience the tenderness of a feminine comradeship.

Perhaps it was not merely a magnanimity born of her years which was responsible for this more impersonal reaction towards any change of direction in the affections of her girls. Perhaps in these later phases of her emotional life she was becoming a more normal woman, and was now turning generally, rather than specifically and occasionally, to the opposite sex in matters of the heart. It has always to

[17] J. M. Edmonds in the *Classical Review,* 1916, 100.
[18] *Etymologicum Magnum,* 250, 10.

be remembered that the grammarian Didymus, as Seneca tells us, and as we have already noticed,[19] discussed the question as to whether Sappho was to be classed as a prostitute; and such evidence as we possess indicates clearly enough that the scandals about her current in later ages were quite as much concerned with her relations with men as with her attitude towards her *hetæræ*.[20] Thus it may well be that her interest in her own sex was at this time definitely declining, and that her words addressed to her girls, "Towards you this mind of mine will never change," were written in a vain contradiction of a change in her sentiments of which she and they were vaguely aware. The disbanding of the group of *hetæræ* who were congregated at her house may have been due to this cause as much as to her illness and to the diminution of her supreme abilities as a dancer and singer.

She was tired, I dare say, of the presence of these girls in her house now that she was no longer young enough to be the absolute mistress of their emotional life. Her house had gradually become a sort of institute, almost an Academy for Young Ladies; for as her years increased there must have been a tendency in her *hetæræ,* her comrades, to become merely pupils and protégées. In the lines written when she was ill, she spoke of the unseemliness of mourning "in a house that serves the Muses," *en moisopolo oikia;* but *oikia* is not merely "a house"—it means a group of buildings, the word being sometimes used, in fact, to signify a palace or headquarters. Thus one pictures it now as a villa surrounded by guest-houses, work-rooms, and other out-buildings—a school, in fact, over which she presided; and it is not difficult to imagine her as becoming suddenly tired of her responsibilities, and as being overwhelmed by the desire to

[19] Seneca: *Epistolæ,* 88. See Chapter One.

[20] As is indicated, for instance, by the invention of that other Sappho "of Eresos" who *was* supposed to be a prostitute. See Chapter One.

shake herself free of the whole thing. There were still left to her, she must have felt, a few years in which her heart's emotions would animate a body not yet wholly bereft of its attractions, there were still a few years left for love and for love's excitement; and it may have been in this spirit of adventure that she turned her no longer fettered attention to the search for that happiness which a creative artist always looks for, and seldom finds, outside his work.

Chapter Twenty-Three

SAPPHO AND PHAON

IN 557 B. C., Sappho must have been fifty-five years old, and is to be pictured as a small, dark-skinned woman, upon whose face the signs of age were almost, but not quite, concealed by the perfection of her toilet, whose smile still retained its enchantment and whose eyes reflected the undying fires of her heart. Her figure, one may suppose, had preserved its shapeliness and grace by reason of the care she had always given it in her capacity as a dancer and as a model of deportment; and in her clothes and general turn-out there was now, no doubt, as always, that daintiness and *chic* which was characteristic of her. Some women of her age have in their gracious maturity a charm as distinguished in its way as any that youth can offer; and when, like Sappho, they make no concealment of the reckoning of their years, but aim in their fifties only to demonstrate the beauty peculiar to the fifties, nor strive to remain in a category which they have outgrown, they are often able to prove that the summit of feminine attraction is not necessarily to be attained in youth. For a woman in middle life there is nothing so ageing as a denial of her age; and on the contrary, there is no better way of retaining her powers of attraction than that of declaring frankly, as Sappho did, that youth is passed. After all, when spring and summer are gone the wealth of harvest-time is at hand.

At this period, the poetess, ever an aristocrat, appears to have given less attention than formerly she did to social distinctions, and to have been more ready to seek her friend-

ships in any walk of life. With Alkaios she had once been able, it would seem, to laugh at Pittakos as a man of no ancestry; she had jeered at Andromeda as a countrified woman; she had hated Doricha as a slave unfit to be married into her family. But now her outlook was broader; and it appears that she was not averse to talking to the peasants and to the sailors and fishermen whom she encountered upon those sunlit beaches where the olive-trees overhung the blue water. There was, for example, a young fisherman named Pelagon in whom she took so much interest that when he met an untimely death, she composed for him an epitaph which his father, Meniskos, might inscribe upon his grave. It read: [1]

> "To the fisherman Pelagon his father Meniskos has set up this oar and this fish-basket as a memorial of a wretched life."

Now in Mitylene at this time there happened to live a certain young sailor, Phaon by name, who was the master of a small sailing-ship which plied for hire between Lesbos and the mainland of Asia Minor.[2] Suidas [3] says that he was a very beautiful young man, and that many women were in love with him; and, indeed, Ælian tells us [4] that in the end he was caught in adultery with another man's wife and was murdered. His good looks were so exceptional that in later generations somebody invented the story that Aphrodite had given him a magic ointment by the use of which his charms had become irresistible; but Pliny was of the opinion [5] that he must have been in possession of the root of the white

[1] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 505.
[2] Servius, on Vergil's *Æneid,* iii, 279.
[3] Suidas: *Lexicon;* under *Phaon.*
[4] Ælian: *Varia Historia,* xii, 18.
[5] Pliny: *Natural History,* xxii, 9.

eryngium—a sort of thistle—which had the form of the male organs and which was well known to cause its possessor to appear overwhelmingly attractive to the other sex.

History does not tell us how Sappho made the acquaintance of this handsome young sailor; but one can imagine her finding reason to hire his ship, and, on some warm summer's night, under the stars or by the light of the moon, drawing him into conversation as she sat by his side at the helm. We know only that she fell in love with him to a degree almost of madness, and that, as Ovid said of her in words very probably taken from one of her own poems, she seemed to be burnt up by her passion for him as when a field of ripened corn is attacked by flames driven onwards by the wind. This was indeed the harvest-time of her life, and in the fires of love was consumed all that her years had brought to perfection.

Apostolius tells us [6] that "Phaon was the man in whose honor as her lover many a song was written by Sappho"; but none of these poems have survived in the few remains of her work which we now possess, although certain fragments which I have already quoted may, for all we know, have been addressed to him—for example, "Stand up and look me in the face as friend to friend, and unveil the beauty that is in your eyes," or, "You scorn me . . ." or again, ". . . to fold you in my arms, my beloved." But she does not seem to have mentioned him by name in these verses, and therefore the story of her passion for him was able to be attributed to that other "Sappho of Eresos," the imaginary figure invented by later apologists to carry the burden of the real Sappho's delinquencies; and consequently, when the tale of the love of Sappho for Phaon was told, people were able to reply that Sappho the courtesan, not Sappho the poetess, was the woman in question. Thus we read in Athe-

[6] Apostolius: *Proverbs,* ii, 707.

næus,[7] "There was a certain courtesan of Eresos, also named Sappho, who was in love with the beautiful Phaon, as Nymphis relates in his *Voyage Round Asia*"; and in Suidas,[8] "Phaon was beloved by many women, amongst them Sappho, not the poetess but another Lesbian." But, since it must have been argued, in contradiction, that there were poems by Sappho evidently bearing out the story, the apologists were obliged to say that the other Sappho, then, was a poetess too; and thus we have the bewildered remark of Suidas that this other Sappho seems also to have been a lyric poetess,[9] and the still more confused reference of Ælian,[10] who, having given his notice of Phaon, and then of Sappho, adds, "But I understand that there was another Sappho in Lesbos, a courtesan, not a poetess."

The mad passion of the sublime poetess for a mere sailor, indeed, was a matter too shocking to the later admirers of her work to be accepted; and, similarly, modern students have endeavored to explain it away, even though the theory that there was another Sappho had to be abandoned as too obviously an invented alibi. Now Suidas gives a list of the titles of the plays written by the Athenian comic-poet, Plato, who flourished a century and a half after Sappho's death; and amongst these he mentions one named "Phaon"; and it may well have been to the plot of this play that Servius refers when he writes: [11] "Phaon, who was a ferryman plying for hire between Lesbos and the mainland, one day ferried over free of charge the goddess Venus in the guise of an old woman, and received from her for his services the alabaster box of ointment the daily use of which made women fall

[7] Athenæus, xiii, 70.
[8] Suidas: *Lexicon,* under *Phaon.*
[9] Suidas: *Lexicon,* under *Sappho ii.*
[10] Ælian: *Varia Historia,* xii, 19.
[11] Servius on Vergil's *Æneid,* iii, 279.

in love with him." The same story is told by Palæphatos, a Greek writer living, apparently, in Alexandria in Egypt, who says: [12] "Phaon gained his livelihood by a boat and the sea, the sea being crossed by his ferry; and . . . having carried the goddess Aphrodite across in the guise of an old woman, and having demanded no fee, he was transformed by her and given youth and beauty."

Scholars of modern times have seized upon this story, and have declared that Sappho has evidently become confused with Aphrodite in some old legend, and that her lover Phaon is simply Phaethōn, a name of Helios, the Sun-god; and thus in Smith's *Classical Dictionary,* for example, we read that the story of Sappho's love for this sailor "vanishes at the first approach of criticism." Actually, however, there is no such legend in Greek mythology which can be traced back further than about a century after the death of Sappho; and the tale is far more likely thus to be some playwright's own introduction to a dramatization of the story of Sappho and Phaon. Athenæus mentions that the Athenian comedy-writer Kratinos, whose plays were acted between about 450 and 420 B. C., says that Aphrodite herself was in love with Phaon, and concealed him amongst the wild lettuces; and he, Athenæus, also writes that the historian Marsyas the Younger (of Philippi), who was perhaps at work in about the first century B. C., repeats the story, but says that Aphrodite hid Phaon amongst the growing barley. Such tales, however, do not indicate the existence of any ancient legend: they seem more probably to show only that the story of Sappho and Phaon, well-known to all, was later elaborated into a drama in which the gods took part. The best proof of this is provided by Strabo,[13] who tells us that the great Menander, the Athenian playwright of the end of the fourth century B. C., himself

[12] Palæphatos: *On Incredible Things,* 49.
[13] Strabo, x, 452.

wrote of the mad love of Sappho for Phaon. Moreover, the above-mentioned statement of Apostolius is appended to a version of the legend evidently taken from Palæphatos, and means that the Phaon of the Aphrodite legend was really the Phaon whom Sappho loved, thus making it pretty well certain, I think, that the legend was based on the well-known story, not the story on the legend.

The poet Ovid, evidently using material which is now lost, including, apparently, Sappho's own poems, has given [14] an account of the love of the poetess for Phaon; and from this piece of work the details of the story can be obtained. At first, it seems, Sappho's passion carried the young sailor wholly away and made him her ardent lover. He was flattered, perhaps, by the adoration of so famous a lady; and in the darkness of the nights when their secret meetings took place, she may well have seemed as sweet to him as any younger woman—sweeter, indeed, since she was so experienced in all the exquisite arts of love. For him there was the romantic attraction of being the chosen lover of the most celebrated woman of the age: for her there was the enthralling thought that he was her Endymion, as Ovid points out; and just as the Moon-goddess used to visit that beautiful shepherd in the Latmian cave, so Sappho used to meet Phaon in a cave amongst the hills behind Mitylene, and there spend the night in his arms, while the nightingales sang in the trees outside. She was, says the poet, his all in all, and in her love at first was all his happiness. He loved her music, and every word she spoke was music, too, to him; yet he "stopped with kisses her enchanting tongue, and found her kisses sweeter than her song."

Ovid makes her say to Phaon: "Neither in the girls of Pyrrha or Methymna, nor in any of those of Lesbos do I

[14] Ovid: *Epistolæ Heroidum,* xv. It was translated into verse by Alexander Pope, 1707.

take any more delight. Anaktoria is of no account, and of no account, too, is the lovely Kydro. No more is Atthis beautiful to my eyes, nor any of the hundred others whom I have loved not without accusation. Audacious man!—what once belonged to many you alone now possess." This all-conquering passion for a good-looking young sailor, in fact, had swept through her sultry heart like a fresh breeze from the sea, and had purged it of the last lingering traces of its earlier anomalies, so that nothing now remained therein but a normal feminine instinct far more devastating than any perversity. Love, the bittersweet, had come to her once more, and for the last time, with his gift of pain; and she must have known that he had come too late.

Only for a little while her dream lasted; and then her lover grew tired of her, or felt that he was unable to cope with her fever. Or it is possible that her brother, Charaxos, who had never forgiven her for her interference in his affair with Doricha-Rhodopis, now discovered her secret, and revenged himself by threatening Phaon's life; or, maybe, her friends, out of mistaken kindness, advised the young man to leave the island. There was a ship in the harbor about to sail with merchandise for Sicily; and upon it Phaon secretly took his departure from Lesbos without bidding farewell to Sappho. One can hardly blame him; and, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the case, he may well have believed that he was acting in her best interests in taking himself out of her life. Yet later generations regarded his behavior as arrogant and disdainful, and the proverb, "You are being a Phaon both in good-looks and in character," passed into circulation, having the meaning, as Suidas explains, that a person is both beautiful and disdainful.

When Sappho received the news that he had gone she is said to have stood rooted to the ground, pale and speechless. She could not believe it. But at length, when she real-

ized that it was indeed the truth, she broke into uncontrolled weeping, and tore her hair and beat her breast. She was still in this state of frenzy when her brother, Charaxos, visited her, and coldly rebuked her, asking her with a sneer what she had to weep about, since she still had her daughter, Kleïs, to comfort her old age. But Kleïs who was now a woman of about thirty, and, presumably, was married, seems to have been no more sympathetic than Charaxos, for Ovid mentions her as being a cause of sorrow to her mother. Everybody was shocked, in fact; and the censures of relatives and friends contributed in no small measure to her state of utter misery.

She could not recover from the sudden blow, and the fact that Phaon had left her without a word of farewell, without even a message, was an unbearable hurt to her pride. She was tortured, too, by jealousy at the thought that when he arrived in Sicily he would amuse himself with the Sicilian women; and Ovid puts into her mouth the passionate cry, "These Sicilian girls will now become your new prey: what, then, have I to do with Lesbos?—I wish to be a Sicilian!" At night her dreams were haunted by this man who had deserted her, yet she awoke only to pray for sleep again. She made her way in the darkness to the cave which had been the scene of her happiness, and there she kissed the earth whereon he had lain, and bedewed the mossy grass with her tears; but the singing of the nightingales was now like a funeral dirge to her ears, and the very trees outside seemed to mourn with her.

At last, being unable to endure a life bereft of his presence, she made up her mind to follow him to Sicily. There was nothing here in Lesbos to keep her: her *hetæræ* were disbanded, she hated her brother, her daughter could not understand, her friends despised her. A lonely old age faced her; and even her Muse had forsaken her. She therefore

boarded a vessel which, I suppose, was bound for Corinth; for there she would be able to find a ship which would carry her by the usual Corfu-route to southern Italy and thence to Sicily. She could have had no definite plans: her only purpose was to reach the land whither Phaon had gone, and there to search for him, and, having found him, to bring him once more into her arms.

Nothing is known of her journey by way of the islands of Chios and Andros to the eastern port of Corinth; but the misery and anxiety of it may be imagined. From the western port of Corinth she sailed on in another vessel, and so came at length to the southern end of the island of Leucas which lay just to the north of Ithaca and Cephallenia, and some fifty miles south of Corfu whence the crossing to Italy was to be made; and it was here in Leucas, at the famous Leucadian Cliff which rises sheer out of the sea in a narrow promontory like a monstrous wall of white stone, that her destiny was accomplished.

The ship had put in near this headland to obtain fresh water or provisions; and Sappho, it would seem, had walked up onto the grassy top of these white cliffs, perhaps to visit a little shrine of Apollo which stood there, and at which she might offer a prayer to that god who, as the patron of music, had always been revered by her. Now, it may be remembered that the poet Stesichoros, whom Sappho perhaps met during her exile in Sicily, and whose works she must assuredly have read, had written a poem about a virtuous young woman—a more or less imaginary character—who, failing to receive a proposal of marriage from the man she loved, committed suicide. In this poem the heroine was said to have flung herself from a cliff which was described as being in the neighborhood of Leucas,[15] and which was probably this particular headland; and it may be that Sappho recalled

[15] Athenæus, xiv, 11.

the incident now as she stood before the shrine of Apollo, looking down the white precipices to the surging sea far below. At any rate, the idea of suicide suddenly entered her head, and took possession of her overwrought thoughts.

During her voyage she must have had time to realize the futility of her pursuit of Phaon; and now that the greater part of her journey was accomplished and Sicily would be reached in no more than seven or eight days, she must have asked herself what hope there was of a renewal of her romance. Phaon would probably not wish to see her; she was so much older than he, and her grief, I dare say, had played havoc with her appearance. She felt the ignominy of her position keenly, it may be supposed; and now that her mind had recovered something of its customary clarity, she must have seen the uselessness of her journey, and have realized that there was no hope of happiness for her. Indeed, she may hardly have dared now to meet Phaon again, for it had become apparent to her, as Ovid says, that he loved nobody but himself, and in her pitiable downfall, would feel nothing but contempt for her.

She was seized with panic. In a frenzy of terror and despair, she made the quick decision to kill herself, and, running like a mad thing across the grass, she flung herself from the cliff's dizzy edge, and fell to her death in the blue waters far below.

A few fragmentary lines of a poem written by Alkaios have survived which, I think, may have reference to the death of Sappho whom once he had loved; for he appears to have outlived her, since in another verse he speaks of himself as a white-haired old man.[16] These fragments read: [17]

[16] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1233, 32.

[17] The skeleton of this poem was found in a fragment given in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1789, 29; and three lines quoted in Hephæstion, 72, Herodian, ii, 941, 15 (Lentz), and the Scholiast on Sophocles, *Œdipus Tyrannus,* 153, are able to be replaced in it.

". . . Misfortune . . . me, a woman miserable, me a sharer in all sorrows . . . house . . . unhappy destiny . . . disgrace . . . for the incurable decline of life is at hand. But panic springs up in the terror-stricken breast of the hart . . . madness . . . ruin . . . the cold sea-waves. . . ."

Sappho's broken body was eventually recovered from the sea, and was cremated, her ashes being carried back to Mitylene for burial, for, as we shall presently read, there are references to her grave in Lesbos.

Chapter Twenty-Four

SAPPHO'S REPUTATION IN LATER TIMES

MOST modern scholars, as has been said, have endeavored to explain away the whole story of Sappho's love for Phaon as a legend; and therefore they have been obliged also to regard her fatal leap from the Leucadian Cliff as fiction. But the evidence is too strong; and, indeed, the very fact that this island of Leucas is the recorded place of her suicide is, in itself, a strong confirmation of the story, for we have learned from Ovid that Phaon had gone to Sicily, and Leucas was a usual stopping-place on the main route thither from Greece.

In Strabo's quotation from Menander, already mentioned, her death at the Leucadian Cliff is recorded, the words being ". . . where Sappho first, mad with love of the disdainful Phaon, leapt from the far-seen rock"; and there is a fragment of a poem by Anacreon, who was writing in the generation after Sappho, which reads:[1] ". . . Then I ascend the Leucadian Cliff and, drunken with love, dive into the white-crested waves"—a probable reference to Sappho's suicide. The evidence of Suidas is also important, for in his *Lexicon,* under "Sappho," he writes, "She threw herself from the Leucadian Cliff for love of Phaon of Mitylene," and, under "Phaon," "Sappho, failing to win Phaon, threw herself from the Leucadian Cliff." In both these references, it is true, Suidas is speaking of Sappho the courtesan, not Sappho the poetess; but everybody is now agreed that there was no

[1] Hephæstion, 133.

such person as this other Sappho, or, rather, that she is identical with the poetess, and therefore the evidence stands.

On the other hand, there are two facts which have to be considered. Firstly, Servius, in the quotation already mentioned says, "Among the women who fell in love with Phaon was one who, in her disappointment, is said to have thrown herself from the Leucadian Cliff"; but he does not mention the person's name. This might mean that he did not accept the story of Sappho and Phaon; but I think that actually his only uncertainty was as to whether there were two Sapphos, and, if so, which one was the woman in question. Secondly, Sappho's name is not mentioned in the list of persons who committed suicide by throwing themselves from this particular cliff, drawn up by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century A. D.;[2] but the omission may have been due to the anathema pronounced upon her name by the Church. As against the testimony of Strabo, however, this negative evidence hardly counts. Strabo[3] begins by telling us, as I have just said, that in Menander's opinion Sappho was the first person to leap from this cliff; and he then remarks that Menander seems to have been misinformed, for the first person to do so was Cephalus, son of Deioneus. But Cephalus, I may mention, is a legendary figure belonging to mythology rather than history; and Sappho's suicide in this manner therefore remains as the first known instance of what was afterwards, apparently, a frequent occurrence, this leap from the Leucadian Cliff coming to be regarded at length as the correct termination of a hopeless romance.

Strabo goes on to say that at the annual festival of Apollo it was the custom of the Leucadians to fling a criminal down from this cliff as a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the people, but that the rite had so far been mitigated that attempts

[2] Photius: *Bibliotheca*, 153.
[3] Strabo, x, 452.

were allowed to be made to break the victim's fall, for example by tying a number of large birds to him so that the strokes of their wings might lessen the pace of his descent, while his friends were permitted to wait in boats to rescue him if he were still alive. But these enforced plunges from the cliff have nothing to do with the suicides, nor do we know whether the custom already prevailed in the time of Sappho, or, if it did, whether it was known to her, or had any connection with her decision to end her life in this way. There is no evidence, I mean to say, that she gave her life as an offering to Apollo, patron god of Music, or was in any way influenced by the thought that her suicide might so be regarded. It was an almost unpremeditated action on her part, I think—the first of its kind; but those who put an end to themselves afterwards by the same means probably had her example in mind, the example, that is to say, of one who could find no relief, save in death, to the misery of unrequited love.

There are two epigrams in the Greek Anthology which indicate that Sappho's ashes were buried in Lesbos. The one is an epitaph composed by Tullius Laurea, who was Cicero's freedman, and was writing in the middle of the first century B. C., which reads: [4] "Passing by this Æolian tomb, stranger, speak not of the poetess of Mitylene as dead; for though this was built by the hands of men, and such human works sink quickly into oblivion, yet if you make enquiries about me on account of my having taken from each of the sacred Muses a flower for my ennead,[5] you shall know that I have escaped the darkness of the Underworld, since there shall never be the light of the sun that has not knowledge of the

[4] *Palatine Anthology*, vii, 17.

[5] Sappho's poetry was arranged in an ennead, or group of nine, there being nine books of her verse.

lyrist, Sappho." By "this Æolian tomb," a tomb in Æolian Lesbos is evidently meant.

The other is an epitaph composed by Antipater of Sidon at about the end of the second century B. C., reading: [6] "It is Sappho that you hide, O Æolian earth, who amongst the immortal Muses is praised as the mortal Muse, who by Aphrodite of Cyprus and by Eros together was reared, who with Persuasion wove the everlasting garland of the Muses of Pieria, who was the delight of Hellas, and of yourself the glory. O goddesses of Destiny that spin the thrice-wound thread of Fate from your distaffs, why did you not spin an all-imperishable day for the poetess who wove the imperishable gifts of the Muses of Helicon?" [7]

I may also mention another epitaph, this being written by Pinytos,[8] whose date is not known: "This tomb holds the bones and the mute name of Sappho, but her wise sayings are deathless."

Thus, it seems indisputable that the ashes and fragments of unconsumed bones collected from Sappho's funeral pyre were buried in Lesbos in a tomb which was to be seen during the ensuing centuries. The fact, however, must not be used as an argument that she did not die abroad. It is not conceivable that her body would have been left lying where it was washed up on the seashore beneath the Leucadian Cliff: it would certainly have been cremated on the spot, and it is hardly likely that the always important duty of collecting the ashes and carrying them to the dead person's native land would have been omitted in the case of so celebrated a traveler.

It will be as well to bring together here the other epitaphs

[6] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 14.
[7] Helicon, the sacred mountain of Apollo and the Muses.
[8] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 16.

upon Sappho which are preserved in the Greek Anthology. The longest is by Dioskorides,[9] who lived in the third century B. C., and is headed, "Dioskorides on Sappho of Mitylene, the poetess, the marvel of lyric poetry." It reads: "Sweetest pillow [10] of love to fond youth, Sappho, with the Muses surely Pieria or ivied Helicon must honor you whose spirit is theirs—the Muse of Æolian Eresos; and surely Hymen, God of Weddings, holding his bright torch, has you with him when he stands in the bridal bedroom; and surely, too, you mourn with Aphrodite when she laments the fair young son of Kinyras, [Adonis], in the sacred grove of the Blessed Dead. In any case, Lady, all hail to you, even as to the gods; for your songs we still hold to be daughters of the Deathless-Ones."

Antipater of Sidon has another epitaph in the Anthology, which reads: [11] "My name is Sappho, and my song surpasses the songs of women even as does that of the son of Mæon [Homer] the songs of men." And in this regard I may mention that the ancients often speak of her simply as "The Poetess," just as they speak of Homer as "The Poet."

Here is an epitaph by Plato: [12] "Some say that there are nine Muses; but they are careless, for look!—there is Sappho of Lesbos who is a tenth." Antipater of Sidon writes again: [13] "Astonishment gripped Mnemosyne"—Memory, Mother of the Muses—"when she heard the songs of the sweet-voiced Sappho, because mankind possessed a tenth Muse." Finally, there is an epigram by an anonymous writer,[14] who, in

[9] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 407.

[10] The word is *prosanaklima,* something reclined or leaned upon, such as a pillow.

[11] *Palatine Anthology,* vii, 15.

[12] Idem, ix, 506.

[13] Idem, ix, 66.

[14] Idem, ix, 571.

speaking of the nine Lyric Poets, praises the works of Pindar, Simonides, Stesichoros, Ibykos, Alkman, Bakchylides, Anakreon, and Alkaios, and adds: "But Sappho was not a ninth to these men; rather she is to be classed as the Tenth Muse amongst the lovely Muses."

Strabo writes:[15] "Contemporary with Pittakos and Alkaios was Sappho, who was something miraculous; for not in the whole course of history do we know of any woman who can be said in the least degree to have rivaled her as a poet." The philosopher Plato in his *Phædrus*[16] reports Socrates as calling her "the beautiful Sappho," and places her amongst "the Wise"; and Maximus of Tyre writes[17] of "the beautiful Sappho, for so Socrates delights to call her because of the beauty of her lyric poetry, although she herself was small and dark." The Emperor Julian also speaks[18] of "the beautiful Sappho."

Aristotle, writing in the fourth century B. C., tells us[19] that "the people of Mitylene have honored Sappho, although she was a woman"; and it seems clear that from the first her memory was held in the highest respect, in spite of whatever scandals were attached to her name; and it was really not necessary for her later apologists to invent another Sappho, the courtesan of Eresos, to whom to transfer the stories about the poetess which they did not think worthy of her. Her reputation, however, seems to have suffered somewhat at the hands of Athenian playwrights, with whom she was an oft-used character; yet I do not think there is any reason to suppose, as everybody seems to do, that it was mainly they

[15] Strabo, xiii, 617.
[16] Plato: *Phædrus,* 235b.
[17] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii), 7.
[18] Julian: *Epistolæ,* xxx.
[19] Aristotle: *Rhetoric,* 1398b.

who brought her into ill-repute. Much was said, and always had been said, against her; but as, in her lifetime, the marvel of her genius and her personality had brought every scandal to nothing, so in the centuries after her death, the exquisite beauty of her work and the undying memory of her glamorous figure, lifted her reputation high above the reach of serious slander until the early Church pronounced her a menace to public morals.

Athenæus and other writers make mention of plays in which she was the leading character, but not one of these has survived. Plays named "Sappho" were written by Ameipsias and Ephippos, about 425 B. C.; Amphis, between 400 and 350 B. C.; Antiphanes, between 375 and 330 B. C.: Timokles, between 350 and 325 B. C.; and Diphilos, about 300 B. C. Plato—the playwright, not the philosopher—somewhere about 400 B. C. wrote a play named "Phaon"; and so did Antiphanes. Antiphanes also wrote one named "Leucadius"; and Menander, about 300 B. C., wrote a play called "Leucadia." But nobody knows how Sappho fared at the hands of these authors, except that in the case of Antiphanes we are told [20] that she was represented as expounding riddles, and by Diphilos [21] she was shown as the mistress of the poets Archilochos and Hipponax. Archilochos, however, lived a century before her time, and Hipponax a generation after it. The poet Hermesianax, who was writing in the time of Alexander the Great (356–323 B. C.), composed a poem in which he represented Sappho as beloved by the poet Anakreon; but Anakreon was but a child when she died. All that we can gather from these sources, therefore, is that Sappho was regarded as a woman who was likely to have had various male lovers; but this tells us no more than we already knew.

[20] Athenæus, x, 73.
[21] Athenæus, xiii, 72.

I should mention here that Athenæus speaks [22] of a treatise *On Sappho,* written by Chamæleon, a disciple of Aristotle (384–322 B. C.); that Strabo writes [23] of Kallias, of much the same date, as a commentator on the poetess; and that Suidas refers [24] to a book *On the Meters of Sappho* written by Drakon of Stratonikeia, in the time of Hadrian. These works, however, are now lost.

In the early days of the Roman Empire the study of Sappho became very general, and it was then, I think, that her love for others of her own sex was first brought into prominence as a remarkable feature of her character. Ovid, as we have seen, speaks about it; Horace [25] describes her in the Underworld eternally "singing to her Æolian strings about the girls of her circle"; and Maximus of Tyre, in a passage already quoted,[26] writes of her feminine friendships, and compares them with the male intimacies of Socrates. Moreover, in a papyrus of about A. D. 200 found in Egypt,[27] we have the definite statement: "She is accused by some of having been irregular [28] in her way of life, and a woman-lover." [29] But it cannot be said that this aspect of her life was an invention or exaggeration of the perverted Roman mind: her poems speak for themselves; yet I may point out that previous to Roman times her behavior in this respect was apparently accepted as quite usual, and, so far as we know, was not commented upon. I stress the point because I wish to correct the usual supposition that it was the Athenian playwrights who did most damage to her reputation. It is cer-

[22] Athenæus, xiii, 72.
[23] Strabo, xiii, 618.
[24] Suidas: *Lexicon,* under *Drakon.*
[25] Horace: *Odes,* ii, 13, 21.
[26] Maximus of Tyre, xxiv (xviii).
[27] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1800, i, i.
[28] *Ataktos,* "lawless," "irregular," "unconventional."
[29] *Gunaikerastria,* "one who desires women."

tainly probable that they represented her as a woman who had had many lovers; but I do not think that it ever occurred to them that she was abnormal.

The great Roman poet Catullus (84 to 54 B. C.) was an intense admirer of Sappho's work, and her famous poem which begins "Peer of the gods he seemeth to me," quoted in Chapter Nine, was translated by him in his well-known verses [30] beginning *Ille mi par esse deo videtur*. He often imitated her style, and had we but more of Sappho's poetry before us we should probably find that he had given us translations—in his *Epithalamia,* for instance—of several of her verses. He was the lover of Clodia, sister of the riotous Publius Clodius, a man notorious for his immoral habits, who was nicknamed Pulchellus, "the Beauty," and was apparently indifferent to the sex of the persons with whom he fell in love; [31] and this Clodia, who may have felt the same impartiality, is always called "Lesbia" by Catullus, obviously in reference to Sappho.

Horace (65 to 8 B. C.) was also a great admirer of her poetry, and some of his odes are thought to be adaptations of her work, as, for example, his verses beginning *Miserarum est neque amori dare ludum neque dulci.*[32] But it is Ovid (43 B. C. to 18 A. D.) who gives us the best insight into Sappho's character in his poem to which I have referred in the preceding chapter, wherein he makes her pour out her love for, and her reproaches upon, the handsome Phaon.

Such, then, is the existing material whereon to base our studies of Sappho; and in this volume I have quoted every surviving fragment of her work. Her poetry was arranged

[30] Catullus, li. There is a handy volume by F. W. Cornish which gives the Latin text and English translation of Catullus.

[31] See my *Life and Times of Marc Antony.*

[32] Horace: *Odes,* iii, 12.

in nine books,[33] of which Book I contained thirteen hundred and twenty lines, as a fragment of papyrus states.[34] There were therefore, probably, nearly twelve thousand lines in the whole collection; and of these we now possess only about six hundred lines or fragments of lines: that is to say, a tattered twentieth part of the whole. The date of the burning of her works by the Church is not known, but as none of the later grammarians annotated her poetry, it would seem that the destruction began fairly early in the Christian epoch, perhaps under Gregory of Nazianzus, about A. D. 380. In the time of Pope Gregory the Seventh, in about A. D. 1073, further wholesale burnings of her books are thought to have taken place; but the only definite information we possess is that provided by Petrus Alcyonius in the sixteenth century, who says that, when a boy, he was told by Demetrius Chalcondyles that the priests of the Greek Church had burnt a large number of the works of the ancient poets, including those of Sappho.

There are no statues or paintings of the poetess which can be regarded as in any sense portraits, for those which now exist are the work of several centuries after her time. Pollux, writing in the second century A. D., tells us [35] that "the people of Mitylene engraved Sappho on their coins," and some of these have been found, the specimens being from the mints of Mitylene and Eresos; but they date from the days of the Roman Empire, six centuries after her death. Cicero [36] refers to a beautiful statue of her at Syracuse in Sicily, the work of Silanion, who flourished about 325 B. C., two and a

[33] Suidas and other writers mention that her poetry was issued in nine books.

[34] *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* 1231, 56.

[35] Pollux, ix, 84.

[36] Cicero: *Against Verres,* ii, 4, 57.

half centuries after her time; Pliny [87] mentions a painting of her by an artist named Leon; and there are one or two other references to statues of her. Her figure appears in various paintings on Greek vases; but these, too, were executed long after her age.

When her works were destroyed there was, in fact, very little by which to remember her, for the reading of the classics in general was discouraged, and the scattered references to her by ancient authors were thus lost to memory. During the Renaissance Italian antiquarians rediscovered the essay by Longinus on the Sublime, and the treatise on Literary Composition by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, by which means two important poems of Sappho were resuscitated; and interest in her at once revived, these poems being translated and published even in England as early as the sixteenth century. In 1584 a play by John Lilly, entitled *Sapho and Phao* (*Sappho and Phaon*), was acted before Queen Elizabeth; and it seems that the author was thinking of Elizabeth and Leicester when he wrote it.

In more modern times I may mention Gounod's first opera, which was entitled *Sapho* and was produced in 1851; and Daudet's famous novel *Sapho,* which, however, has nothing directly to do with the poetess. British poets, such as Edwin Arnold, Tennyson, and, particularly, Swinburne, wrote translations and imitations of Sappho's poetry; and Byron was one of her great admirers. A stimulating advance in the proper study of her work was due to the publication of Bergk's collection of nearly all the fragments in his *Poetæ Lyrici Græci,* issued in Leipzig in 1882. In 1885 H. T. Wharton published a little volume entitled *Sappho,* which gave English translations of the fragments; and a short account of her life; and in later years short studies of her work by other authors appeared.

[87] Pliny: *Natural History,* xxxv, 34.

Then came the great discoveries by Grenfell and Hunt and others in Egypt, published in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri,* and the *Berliner Klassikertexte.* These scholars, while excavating Græco-Egyptian cemeteries at Oxyrhynchus in the Fayûm and elsewhere in Egypt, found that the coffins of the period were made of papier-mâché, in the composition of which scraps of old books and letters had been used; and thus a vast mass of torn fragments of lost literature was recovered, these including several pieces of Sappho. A new and important study of the poetess was then made by E. Lobel, and published in 1925; but the best and most recent work upon the subject, which deals with all the known remains of her verses, including the Egyptian discoveries, is to be found in J. M. Edmonds' *Lyra Græca,* the revised edition of which was published in 1928. Good bibliographies will be found in Wharton's *Sappho,* and in *The Poems of Sappho* by E. M. Cox.

In view of the tremendous and altogether exceptional praise bestowed upon Sappho by ancient writers, it is not surprising, though it is none the less a relief, to find that the newly discovered fragments maintain the high standard set for us by the verses and single lines which were already known. Before the Egyptian discoveries were made that great scholar Symonds had spoken of her as the one poet in all the world whose every line has the seal of absolute perfection—I have quoted his words in the first chapter of this book; and Edwin Arnold had called her "that exquisite poetess . . . whose genius among all feminine votaries of singing stands incontestably highest." Scholars and poets alike had poured out their enthusiastic praise of her; and it may be imagined, thus, that those who first examined the new lines found in Egypt did so with a certain anxiety in case the judgment of to-day would not continue to be in accord with that of antiquity.

But any such fear that may have been felt was soon set at rest. Out of the dust of Egypt there came one beautiful fragment after another to justify the opinion previously held. The only disconcerting fact, was that the newly discovered love-poems were addressed to women, not to men; and thus those arguments which had sometimes been put forward to explain away the use of the feminine gender in the two important poems already known, were proved to be untenable. It should be remembered, however, that the tendency in certain men and women to be stirred emotionally by persons of their own sex was not considered by the Greeks to be reprehensible in any serious degree, and that, therefore, all modern censures are out of focus. To judge one age by the standards of another is unscholarly. There are, of course, certain qualities which may be classed as good or bad, virtuous or sinful, in all ages; but the standards of morality in amatory matters change so rapidly and vary so widely that criticism is best suspended altogether, save in so far as it can be advanced as an expression of a purely personal or party opinion.

Beauty, moreover, must be appraised without any regard for the conditions which produce it: that is axiomatic in art. No discerning person, either in antiquity or in our own time, has failed to see that Sappho's poetry is to be ranked amongst mankind's greatest artistic achievements, and it is by her poetry that she must be judged.

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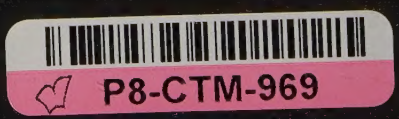
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